HISTORY OF ART

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME TWO

ELIE FAURE

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IN TWO VOLUMES

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Modern Art
The Spirit of the Forms

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY WALTER PACH

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HISTORY OF ART

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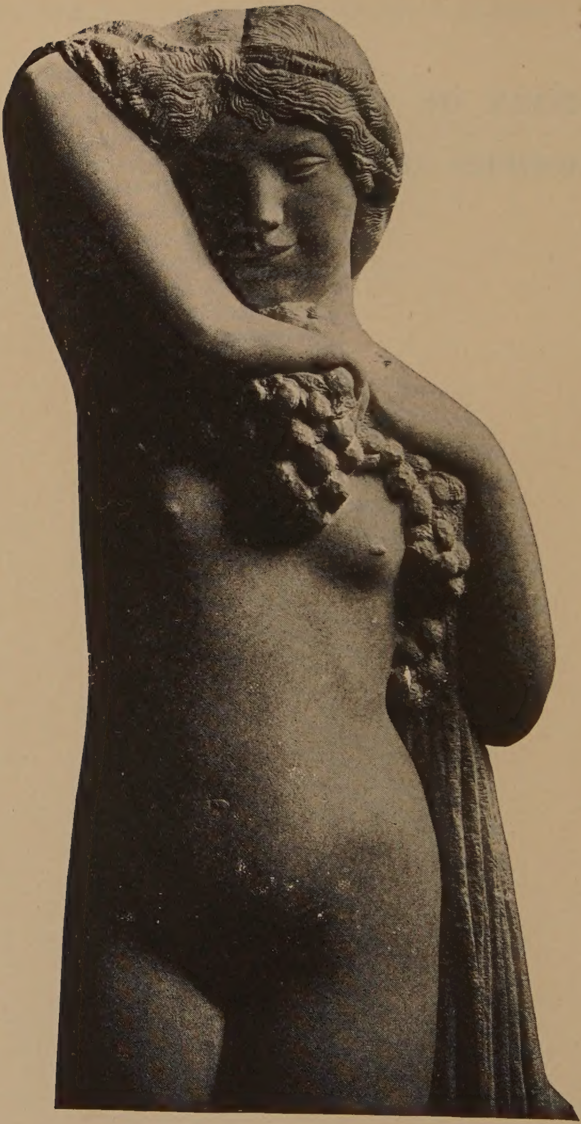

JOSEPH BERNARD. Pomona.

Elie Faure
HISTORY OF ART

MODERN ART

TO
RENOIR

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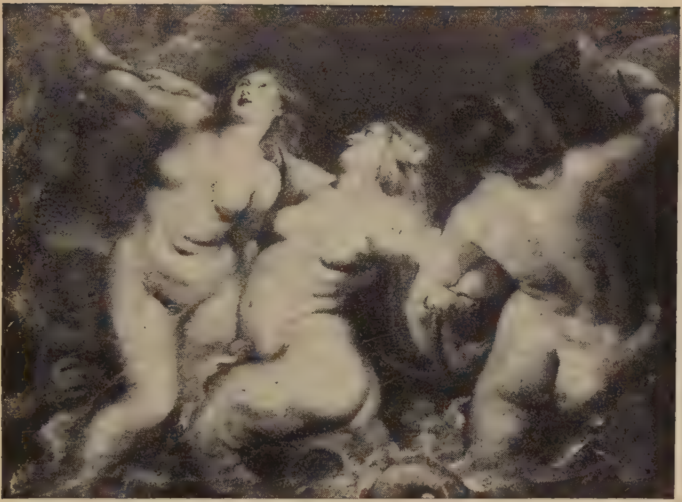


Rubens. The Landing of Marie de Medici, detail (*Louvre*).

INTRODUCTION

Margaritas ante porcos

THE French Revolution is the last step in the movement inaugurated by the Renaissance. It is marked by the reformation of social metaphysics and of morality, but in the depths of instinct it is destined, without doubt, to define the individual. It is the violent act which overcomes the last resistance offered by the monarchical system to the investigation which, five centuries earlier, had been outlined by the masons of the French commune and definitely begun by the artists of Italy. The corporations being broken up, the right of association being impaired, and the theoretical equality of social rights and of taxation being won, the social analysis is effected. The philosophic analysis of Kant, which carried to its logical conclusion the effort of Descartes, of Spinoza, of Bayle, of Montesquieu, of Leibnitz, of the English sensualists, of Voltaire, of Diderot, and of Rousseau, as well as the psychological tragedy lived through by Montaigne, by Cervantes, by Shakespeare, and by Pascal—all made it necessary. Scientific analysis will follow in due course, for there is no longer any political obstacle between the intelligence and the experience in which, for a century, man will pursue the absolute. If it leads him only to the relative, the reason is, perhaps, that he is too eager or that he was seeking this relative in order to regain mysticism by liberating his intuition. But no matter. The possibility of bringing about a new selection, through social investigation among men and by scientific investigation among facts and ideas, justifies the Revolution.

Men combat it in our own day, in the name of the aristocratic and religious values which made twenty centuries of history. Exhausted by their own strength, these values had turned to dust. The Revolution had only to breathe upon them. Its errors, its puerilities, its insufficiencies, its blind hatred for that which it had to pull down, do not lessen its importance. In France and outside of France, the individual, unleashed by it into the full liberty of sensation and research, has almost risen above his physical surroundings and, rebounding with all his might into the unexplored domain of intellectual pride, has given to posterity the poem of that pride. From Carlyle to Ibsen, from Stendhal to Emerson, from Schopenhauer to Nietzsche, a new race of prophets has appeared, summoning men to follow them or perish. Thus the Revolution, which had torn men from the old social pantheism already shaken by the Renaissance, was preparing new rhythms. For a century everything issues from the Revolution, even German realism, much nearer, perhaps, to the forces liberated by the upheaval than are many of the inorganic doctrines which thrive with difficulty on the hastily created words which sustain its activity. The poems of individualism will remake the social world. When the individual is so strong that he tends to absorb everything, it is time for him to be absorbed himself and to merge himself and disappear in the multitude and the universe.

French painting, for a hundred years, has accomplished the same task. It is still misunderstood, especially by the French. It is one of the miracles of history, comparable to the most surprising. It has produced ten men of genius, more than the great century of Holland, or of Flanders, or of Spain, as many as the great centuries of Italy. It appeared precisely on the morrow of the spread of revolution over Europe, offering to souls waiting in silence the power of liberation which the march of the republican armies brought to the legitimate appetites of the peoples and to the ideas of their shepherds. It is thanks to that march that it appeared in France and not in some other place, as it was thanks to the struggle of Germany to regain possession of herself from Napoleon, that the great German music, through Richard Wagner, closed its heroic cycle. The explosion of sentiment, so long deferred, employs color as its expression. Conquered Europe and the Orient, faintly in view, tumultuously enter the sensuous emotion of the French. The Romantic dream and classical realism clash and mingle in France, where Italy and Germany meet for the third time. And it is here that the Renaissance of the south and the Renaissance of the north confront each other to affirm a definitive accord.

This accord, which French painting consecrates (it is the eternal destiny of France to balance, in divine measure, the diffused life of the north and the intelligence of the south) was realized for an hour by Rubens. Through him, the mind of Michael Angelo was linked with the humanity of Rembrandt to define the mission of Europe in its profoundest unity, through the most instinctive, the most spontaneous, the most animalistic, but also the most permanent, work in painting—indifferent to everything except object and movement. Under pain of death the north of Europe had to accept the assimilation of Mediterranean thought, just as Mediterranean thought, in order to survive itself, had to load its arabesque with the tide of direct sensations, of music, of revery, and of mystery brought by the soul of the north. We live by our original innocence; but when movements of ideas are born around us and encircle us little by little, like great waters around an island, if our innocence refuses to extract from them the nourishment which will renew it, a frightful aridity succeeds the bursting forth of fruits which rendered it so savory. That which kills is not learning: it is the failure to feel what one learns. Innocence is immortal to him who is ever seeking. It is reborn of its ashes, and the new presentiment appears only when experience and study have destroyed or confirmed the older presentiment. The north and the south, since the invasions of the barbarians, had influenced each other reciprocally and unceasingly, but never, until Rubens, had the spirit of intellectual prophecy introduced its continuing line into the indistinct torrent of colors and matter in order to force upon the image of the world, through the power of a single man, the form, one and living, of the European mind. It was the decisive step after the mission of Montaigne, the formidable wedding of lyricism and the will recreating an imaginary world upon the ruins of Christian metaphysics which had been undermined by the French pessimist. The theological universe may crumble everywhere. In the soul of the great European, from Montaigne to Schopenhauer, cradled on the moving wave of symphonic painting, uplifted on the great wings of the orchestral poem, supported by the sublime hypothesis of gravitation and transformism, a new myth is reforming itself for the man of the future. Living in the bosom of a world which, very probably, has no other purpose than to interchange uninterruptedly, increasingly, and daily the more complex of the heedless forms of energy and love, the man of the future will not know any other paradise in heaven or on earth than that of overcoming the need to increase and to harmonize his energy and his love within himself. That, at least, is the obscure desire which the heroes of European pessimism have for three hundred years been expressing, unknown to themselves, I admit, in their philosophy, their art, and their science. The modern Prometheus, Don Quixote, believes in the sacredness of his mission. But Cervantes loves this madman far less for the phantoms he pursues in his generosity and his courage, than for the divine power of his illusion.

Why did this movement, which was born in the south, expand in the regions of the north? Italy, through the Venetians, had written the prelude of the great symphonic poem which the north was to carry into the flesh and the bone of Europe through Rubens and Sebastian Bach, which was to be established in its intelligence through Spinoza and Leibnitz, which was to stir its heart through Rembrandt and Beethoven, to extend it into space and time through Newton and Lamarck, to render it subtle by the passionate exchange of souls and sensations through Dostoievsky and the Russian musicians, and finally to be diffused in the will of the élite through the German pessimists and in their sensibility through the French painters—they and others uplifted with lyric intoxication, but supported in their intellectual power by the two centuries of discipline and of method which separate Descartes from Kant.

Only, this effort had exhausted Italy, which, into the bargain, was torn by France and the Empire. Moreover, the discovery of America transported from the southern seas to the ocean the center of gravity of the globe. Finally, the Reformation, wrenching the peoples of the north from the spiritual domination of the Church and from the political tyranny of Spain, had permitted them to explore their own mystery. In fact, there is only one man more in the south, Velasquez, who is a miracle, and in whom one may see, by turns and with equally valid reasons, a mere virtuoso —the greatest of all, it is true—and the rarest mind in painting, the king of silence and of the air. But with the exception of Spain, escaping for another half century the decline of the south on account of her being the first to open the route to the west, the whole life of Europe is concentrated in England, in Flanders, in Holland, or is maintained in France, which is condemned to a kind of spiritual immortality because of her being at the center of all the sea routes and all the ethnic sources which have fashioned the Occident, Italy, Spain, England, Germany, and the Low Countries. When Rubens borrows from Raphael his decisive arabesque, the world feels clearly that its curves will ramble and its lines will be spread out to infinite thinness in the void of abstraction unless there should be supplied to that arabesque, in order to render it fruitful, the cloudy sky of the north, its fat lands, its powerful vegetation, the liquid and changing splendor of its light, the heavy food of its men in whose blood rolled together the juice of meats, revery, beer, the desire for women, moral strength, and mist.

Thus, the powerful man seizes upon the elements of the symphony of the people interrupted by the Renaissance, and raises them slowly from his senses to his brain and fuses them once more in his heart in order, sooner or later, to prepare in the multitudes new reasons for action. In the intelligence of the god, there are no longer isolated forms. The whole poem is in the interpenetration of all the forms of the world, which painting, more than all other languages, expresses with so much force and evidence and in which it precedes, by a long period, the constructions of the biologists and the mathematicians. In each new organism, which a great lyric work is, we shall find henceforth more sensual wealth and more intellectual wealth, and therefore, when the poet dies, more elements given back to life in general, more anguish, more desire, more mystery, more tragic individuals, and more of complex evolution. In the measure that the chorus breaks up into fragments and sinks lower in the multitudes, and swells and mounts in the hero, the solitude of the hero is increased by the indifference or the hostility of the multitudes. But the occult influence of this solitude widens. In the Middle Ages the artist was a workman, lost in the crowd of workmen, loving with the same love as theirs. Later on, under the Renaissance, he was an aristocrat of the mind, moving almost on a par with the aristocrat of birth, later on again, a skilled laborer seized upon by the victorious autocracy; and still later, when the autocracy finally crushes the aristocracy under its own ruins, when workman is separated from workman by the death of the corporations, the artist is lost in the crowd, which is ignorant of his presence or which misunderstands him.

Who shall tell the martyrdom of him who keeps love alive within him and whom love flees or repulses?

There is, with democracy, only one aristocrat, the artist. That is why it hates him. That is why it pays divine honors to the slave who is part of it, he who no longer knows his work, who no longer loves, who knows the art of complete repose proper to the cultivated classes, and consents to reign over the other slaves, a prize-list in his hand. Even when illustrious, even when hated, even when dragged through the sieve by the mob of the *salons*, the collectors, and the critics, even when forcibly introduced into the prison galleys of the Academies and the Schools, the artist is alone. David detests the School, the School makes of him its god. For the bleating herd of David's pupils, Delacroix, celebrated when twenty years old, is a wolf. Ingres, who despises Rome and the Institute, directs the School of Rome and presides over the Institute. Men oppose the two masters to each other in the name of theories and systems which both detest. Baudelaire, Daumier, and Flaubert are dragged before the magistrates. Daumier, by the way, in whom are fused the flame of Rembrandt and the force of Michael Angelo, is only a hired merrymaker. Manet is the enemy of the people. Zola is driven from the public journals for defending him. The Impressionists are hooted because they do not know how to draw; later on, their drawing is vaunted in order that their successors may be reviled. The men who pick up a poor living from the crumbs that fall from their table declare them incomplete. Men laugh at the construction of Cézanne, who rediscovers construction. Men mock the color and the bloatedness of Renoir, who brings back solidity of volume and lyricism of color. Do they not stand as much alone as Rembrandt dying of poverty, or Velasquez the valet of the court, or Watteau, who was picked up consumptive by a charitable friend? O painting! sublime art, the highest, the most subtle, the most sensual, but at the same time the most intellectual of all, ode, dance, and music transposed into the objective world, as far from a common soul as transcendental algebra is from a primary education; the reader of newspaper novels, the champion at dominoes, the officeholder, the chamberlain, and the voter judge you! They give you prizes, like a fattened ox. O pearl, in which there is the play of the whole sea and the immense dramatic sky, and the eternal tragedy of movement and of color, and the proudest and most mysterious tremors of the soul, the swine decide your fate! It is well. Your solitude is so well peopled. You know it. There is not in the world a sound, a tone, a gesture, a form, a ray, or a shadow which exists alone. All listen to one another and answer one another, and enter one into the other by secret passages; and when, from their correspondences, from their common reflections, from their unanimous and joyous direction toward an invisible focus, harmony is born, it transmits all that is universal to the solitary man.

A century tending entirely toward scientific research contributed not a little to the bringing about of a growing misunderstanding between this solitary man and the mass, which was more and more incapable of feeling the language of form. The scientist evicted the artist, a little more each day, from the place which, since the Renaissance, he had occupied in the respect of the men of his time. And men are much more attentive to the humanitarian or practical results obtained by the seekers than they are to the intrinsic quality of their work. They erect altars to the latest inventor of a vaccine or of a stove; they are ignorant of him who comes to change the equilibrium of souls for a century or for a thousand years. It is so ordered, and the myth of Hercules is far better known to the crowd than the myth of Prometheus. Also, it is ordered that the crowd shall prefer those who bear only the stamp of Hercules to the less accessible demiurges who propose to us the grandest hypotheses imagined since the Hindu or Chaldean thinkers, and who inclose the course of the stars in algebraic formulas or capture life at its sources to conduct it, step by step, from the primeval clay to the intelligence of the god. The crowd is ignorant of the fact that these hypotheses have a formidable power over the practical direction of science. It is ignorant of the fact that pure science is only an analytical system destined, precisely, to verify these hypotheses and to draw positive results from their activity. It knows even less that these hypotheses are, fundamentally, of an æsthetic order, that they yield certitudes to which pure science does not attain. It does not know that these hypotheses have this in common with the great artistic generalizations: that while they bring us the intoxication of certitude, they are undemonstrable by experimentation. How then should the crowd understand that, in a way even less known, they also exercise a magical influence upon the evolution of lyricism, since the sense of lyricism has been drawing a little farther away from it every day for five centuries and has abandoned it completely in the last hundred years? How should it grasp the fact, for example, that the realistic art of the end of the last century is only an echo, almost direct, from scientific materialism; that Impressionism was born from the necessary encounter of the most extreme individualism with the most positive conquests of optics, the analysis of the scientists and the social analysis finally resulting in the separation of man from man as one objective phenomenon is separated from another? And why should it know this? Nine times out of ten, the artist himself is ignorant of it, and that ignorance is of benefit. If he suspects it, abstraction and system become his guides, and he ends by confusing the end with the means and dashes against a wall. The poet is carried to the peak of the unconscious; he gains consciousness only that he may better obey the movements of the unknown waves which cradle him, and that he may widen, through consciousness itself, the limits of the unconscious. It is possible that Rembrandt knew Spinoza, even if it is improbable that he read the *Ethics*, since he did not know Latin. It is sure that La Tour associated with Voltaire and read him, that Greuze listened to Diderot, and that David had read Rousseau. But it is practically certain that Le Nôtre did not know the philosophy of Descartes. And as against La Tour, against Greuze, against David, Le Nôtre was to prove correct. Thus, without seeking to imitate him, he bore the greater resemblance to Descartes.

There is no reason why the artist—and perhaps the most innocent, the least cultivated, especially—should live outside the currents of instinct which determine the special direction of the minds of his time. On the contrary, it would be quite surprising if he did not consider the universe and destiny from an angle nearer to the one which guides the thought and the experiences of the scientists and the philosophers who are his contemporaries. Solidarity of needs begets solidarity of ideas and expression. I do not believe that the scientists themselves, at least in the direction they give to their research, escape the needs of their epoch. All our ideas bear the trace of the profound events which surround us and which touch us, and the mathematical harmonies themselves, despite their apparent eternality, are perhaps not much more independent of the moral ground whence they spring than are the great sensual constructions of the painters or the musicians. The sensibilities of a given age are all directed toward the same invisible goal; they seize upon the relationships which another age would not seize upon; they erect systems which satisfy the obscurest and the strongest of their desires. It is thus that we should understand the inner, spontaneous, and necessary accord between Phidias and Plato, between Giotto and Dante, between Rembrandt and Spinoza, between Le Nôtre and Descartes, between Auguste Comte and Courbet.

We understand, therefore, how it is that science, acting upon the evolution of men's minds and being influenced by them in return, seems to arrive to-day at conclusions almost antagonistic to those within which certain overeager desires tried to arrest it twenty or thirty years ago. On all sides it is bursting in upon the seemingly exhausted domain of philosophy and of mysticism, and as it penetrates into this domain, it is also acted upon thereby. Intuition is once more in favor, and that was bound to come. What was formerly called Reason—which was, one or two centuries ago, from Descartes to Diderot, an admirable individual instrument for passionate investigation, a kind of living being—had become rationalism, an immobile religion, independent of the senses, emancipated from the heart: a lamp in a sepulcher. Those who little by little created the irreducible antagonism between method and life had not learned to see, on summer evenings after the rain—one of those evenings, green and pure, when colors and forms seem to crystallize in themselves what remains of the daylight—they had not learned to see a bed of geraniums, red as blood, in a geometrical garden whose walls of verdure, carved out by the will, tremble like the surface of water. They do not know the meaning of the Italian arabesque, carrying into life the thunderbolt of its line—which

Rubens, in turn, loaded with all the weight of blood and matter which it could bear without giving way. They had never looked at the frieze of the Apsaras of Angkor, dance and music, sensual movement of the universe itself subjected to a mathematical rhythm by a miracle of the mind. They are probably the same persons who are now seizing upon rehabilitated intuition to enthrone it in a region outside of the intelligence, and are thereby condemning it to death. Man is unable to preserve his equilibrium. He has to divide himself into halves and project himself now toward one of the poles of his soul, now toward the other. He who believes only in science is like an orchestra musician who imagines that the whole symphony resides in the mechanism of his instrument. He who believes only in intuition is like an orchestra musician who imagines that the symphony continues when all the players break their strings and their bows. Man cannot admit to himself that intuition is only a flame spurting forth at the point of contact of an infinity of previous analyses and of accumulated reasoning, and that it delivers him from criticism through the faculty that it has, in action, in art, and in science, for generalizing and for choosing.

For five centuries, the rôle of the European hero has consisted precisely in maintaining within himself the harmony between the intelligence and the heart, a harmony which will assure to the reasoning individual access to one of those moments of certitude seized upon by the people in order to exhaust the climax of love which, once every thousand years, perhaps, makes it think and act like a single hero. This is true even in the France of the eighteenth century, when Diderot has his presentiment of the monotonous movement which always goes beyond so-called moral progress, and which is ceaselessly giving birth to new forces against which this pretended moral progress is forever struggling, and when Lamarck gathers together in his rational differentiation of the organisms the elements of the biological symphony which he proposes to the future. All the conquests of reason, all its stored-up knowledge, contribute to the nourishing of an instinct. Plato the Sophist stood at the threshold of the innumerable avenues that lead to the new growth of popular genius which was named Christianity. And Plato's point of departure was the popular Hellenic genius arrived at its maturity. Feeling, the point of departure of reason, is also the point at which it arrives; and the gaining possession of consciousness brings us back to fruitful unconsciousness wherein the great peoples, like the great individuals, spontaneously create ideas and images in their mature years with as little effort as they created children in their youth. It is to obey the command of life that reason finally comes, not through cowardice, but through courage, to a new mysticism. It is in vain that pure science advances; it thrusts back the mystery, it does not destroy it. Once the threshold of mystery is crossed, art regains its whole dominion.

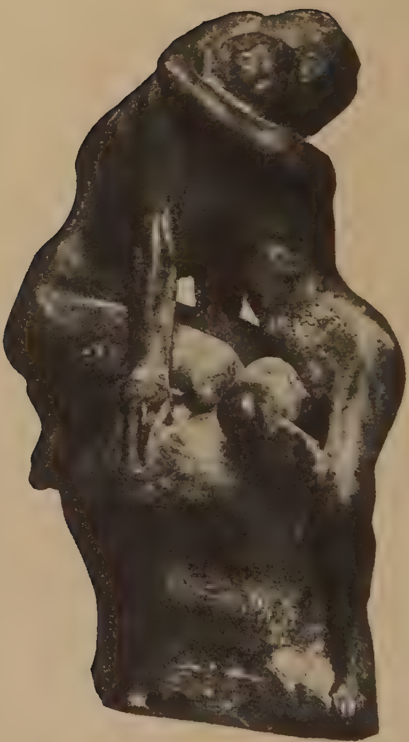
The modern world is so complex, so uncertain in its directions, so diverse in its elements, the field of society is so upset, the destinies of Europe have been rendered so precarious by the greatest war in history, such a whirlwind of conflicting interests and ideas sweep it along, that its morrow is obscure. And yet the needs of the European crowd remain what they were. When whole peoples take part in war, which but the day before yesterday was the game and means of the aristocracies, war has more influence upon their common evolution. Is not war itself a phenomenon outside of consciousness, a terrible biological crisis in which the individual disappears, in which there burst forth only those blind powers of collective life destined to destroy or to renew from top to bottom the faculties of energy and of love that take part in them? As the intelligence was outstripped by life, moral consciousness was overflowed by war. In the wind which shakes the vine branches, under the whirling rain of grapes and of flowers, Dionysiac intoxication bounds to the sound of cymbals, laughter, and gasps of love. But the claws of the panthers tear the naked limbs. Death and resurrection turn in the bacchanale. If the European soul is not annihilated, the men of Europe will build.

The nineteenth century, especially in France, is a cathedral dispersed. It must be erected. The nonexistence of architecture in the last hundred years is very significant. The reign of the individual brings with it the downfall of the monument. We have seen that very often in history—after Egypt, after legendary Greece, when Japan had emancipated herself from China, and when the Renaissance caused the stained-glass windows to descend from the churches and ground them up on canvas, and when their statues descended to ornament its avenues and gardens. If the reign of the individual ends by his being given back to the multitude because he becomes too densely peopled himself to contain himself, architecture, the work of the anonymous crowds, will be reborn, and painting and sculpture will re-enter the monument. The whole art of to-day, even in its most transitory forms, is obeying an obscure need of subordination to some collective task still unknown; and this need suggests to our art—confused and diverse though it be in appearance—the direction of its lines and the quality of its tones. Whither do we go? Wherever the spirit of life wills it.

MODERN ART

The marvelous envelops us and we
breathe it like the atmosphere; but
we do not see it.

Charles Baudelaire



RODIN

ANTWERP.

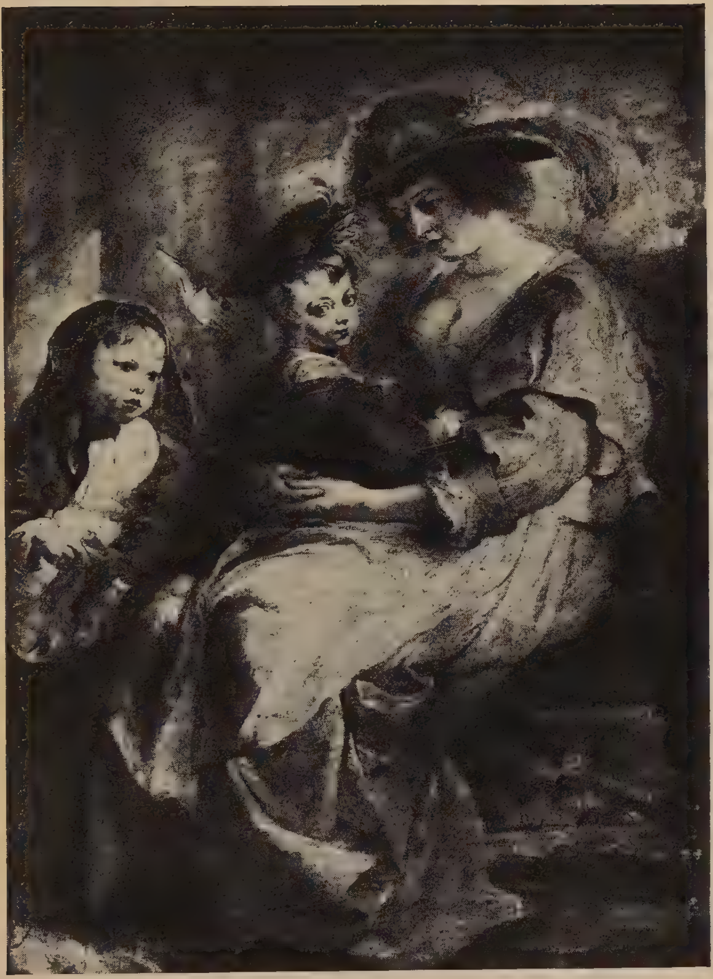
Chapter I. FLANDERS

I

THE day when, far from the Flanders of his ancestors, Rubens was born, Antwerp was still to be rebuilt. His resigned and courageous mother had shared the exile of his slightly mad father, who had become the lover of the wife of William of Orange after having been one of the closest companions of that hero. When Rubens was ten years of age and his mother, who had become a widow, brought him to Antwerp, there was still the threat of fire beneath the ruins of the great port. It had not forgotten the stake and the gibbet, the statues torn from the temples, the sea of blood that had been shed and the livid face of the Duke of Alba in his iron armor.

Only after two and a half centuries, when liberty was conquered, would Antwerp regain its position in Europe. For the artists, it was no longer the live city which had tried, with Quentin Matsys, to escape from the Gothic spell of Bruges and to enter the modern spirit through individual effort, and which, with Breughel, had succeeded in doing so. It was that very effort, however, which had brought forth the Beggars. Rubens had been conceived in the thick of the storm; within him he bore, together with the wild hope of the people and the energy of its most splendid moment of activity, all of its past conquests. The decadence of Flanders and of Antwerp could affect only those who were to come after him. He was to profit by the brief moment when Spain loosened her grip a little, and to send forth, like a flood, the mass of life that for two centuries had been accumulating in the granaries, the barns, and the ships of the country, and in the hearts and minds of men, through the labor of their fields, their cities, and their ports.

He did better than that. No country was placed more advantageously than Flanders for the gathering together of the currents which for two centuries had been crossing the Occident in all directions. For a hundred years Bruges had served as a bond of union between England, the Baltic, Venice, and the Orient. Antwerp was the first commercial port of the world under Charles V. It drained France by the Meuse and the Scheldt, Germany by the Rhine, and the Indies, Italy, and the lands of Spain by the sea. At the critical hour when the north and the south found themselves face to face in their age-old activities, when the problem of religion was opposing the social idealism of the Latin countries to the economic realism of the Germanic countries, Flanders, the heart of the universal empire of Charles V, was quivering from all the shocks

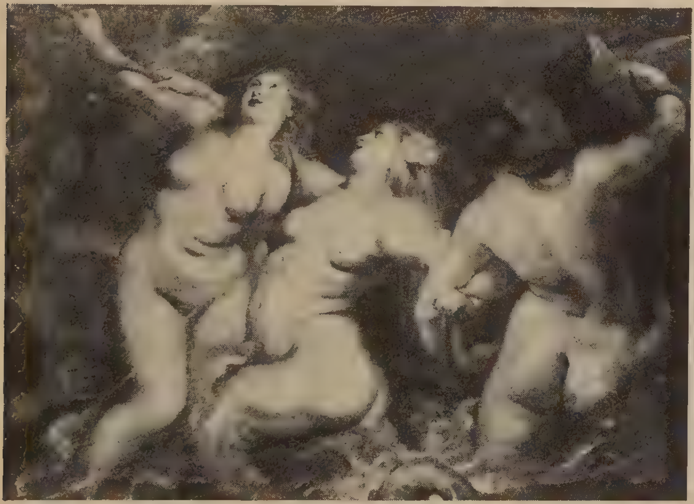


RUBENS. His wife and children (*Louvre*).

which the arteries of commerce brought upon it by merchandise, books, and soldiers. Struggling both for its independence and in support of the Reformation, it remained a country of the Empire and remained Catholic. It was natural that the man who expressed with an eternal force this unique moment of its life, should infuse southern intellectualism into the substantial, fat, and moving matter of the north.

The painters of Flanders had been trying to accomplish this for a hundred years. But Bruges was no longer sufficiently alive at the beginning of the sixteenth century for her Romanized masters, Jan van Mabuse and van Orley, to be able to assimilate the soul of Italy deeply, without danger. Antwerp, on the contrary, even at the end of that century, had not yet attained a degree of maturity sufficient for the Italian soul to penetrate the original nature of Flanders. The attempt of Quentin Matsys was premature; Martin de Vos, Coninxloo, Francken, and the good portraitist Pourbus were not, as men, big enough; the task of Breughel, a Hollander by birth, who released the spirit of the north from its primitive matrix, was too all-absorbing for him to attempt to find his agreement with the mind of the peninsula. Rubens had scarcely to listen to his two teachers, Otto Venius, with his Italian tendencies, and van Noort, with his Flemish tendencies, to discover in himself the destiny meted out to him by fate; the eight years he passed in Italy in the intimacy of the giant realizations of Tintoretto and of Michael Angelo, his repeated journeys to Spain, to France, and to England, the seven languages that he spoke, his superb manner of life and his two marriages for love permitted him to fulfill this destiny with unparalleled generosity and with royal abundance.

What a life! He was the only hero of humanity, doubtless, to unite the splendors of external life with the splendid images of it which he made. The period, in which the aristocracy had for two hundred years been receiving its education in art and had been charmed by his taste for the sumptuous, had conspired to have him maintain, until the end, his exceptional balance between moral health and sensualism. He was like a king of Flanders; he represented it to the kings.

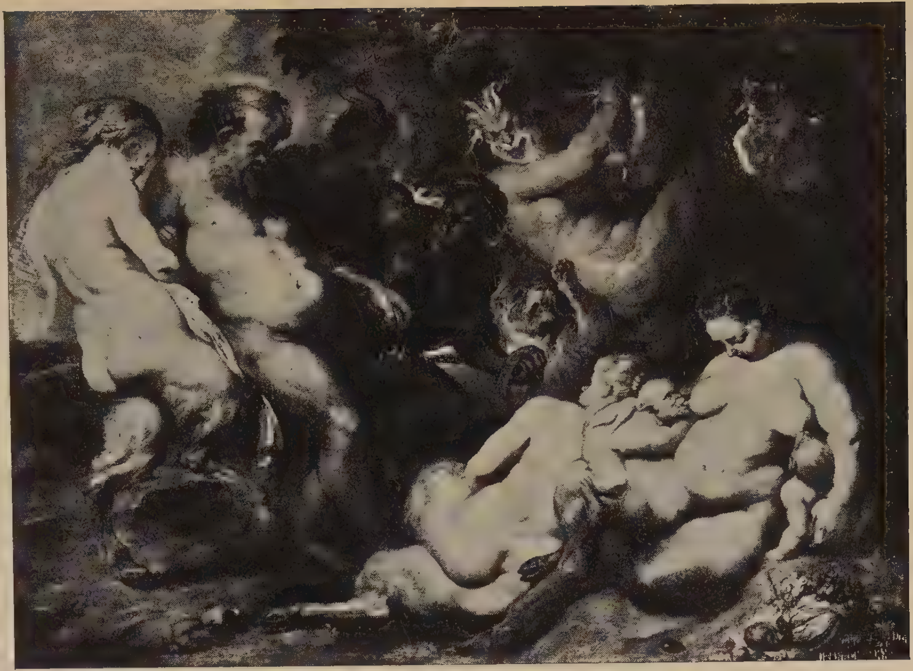


Rubens. The Landing of Marie de Medici, detail (*Louvre*).

His great dinners, his receptions, his fortune, his castles, his luxury, and his embassies, none of these could detract from him. Never even does he consent to admit to us that he suffered from his second marriage when, at the age of fifty-three, he married a girl of sixteen. From his very disquietude he drew forth a multiplied force and spread across the future the joy which he could not ask from her and which he could not give her. He ended his triumphal existence by triumphing over the anguish which he could not have failed to feel.

If in this exceptional man one desired to find only the highest expression of the Flemish nature which he unites with universal nature, one would perceive only one aspect of his work, the most accessible, in truth, but not the most essential. One would have to turn to Jordaens, who came fifteen years after him, a pupil of van Noort, as he was, but who, while turning toward him at every moment, was able to live and act with such confidence in his strength that, outside of Rubens, he remains the most robust interpreter of Flemish paganism.

Almost never did the feet of Jordaens leave the soil of Flanders. His eyes almost never pierced beyond the opal space of Antwerp. Almost never did they see anything beyond the going and coming of the ships through the luminous mist on the muddy river, and the products of the sea and of the countryside that were sold in the market place. His canvases heap up masses of living matter. His confusion is a force. A heavy rhythm gives to his blessed orgies an accent of ponderous joy which approaches the general idea, the unconscious symbol. Everything drinks and eats, all the mouths are open, all the nostrils and the eyes and the throats. Dogs, cats, and chickens wander among the gluttons and the gormandizers, snapping, picking, and licking the bones fallen under the table, the sauces that have been spilled, and the beer and wine that have overflowed. Flesh has the thickness of pumpkins that have opened, human fat is in layers like sausages, the skin of the women is as warm as the sides of soup pots, their hands lie on their breasts with the bunches of grapes from the baskets, faces and coppers glisten, and the smacking of lips and the slapping of hands on thighs are rhythmed by the gurgle of the bottles. Men



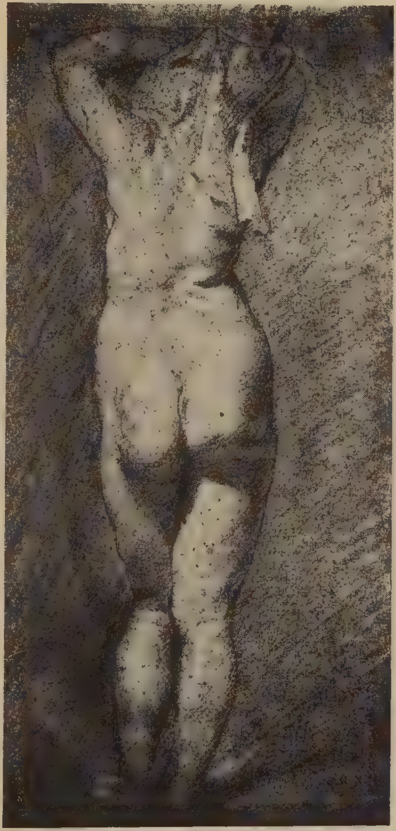
Rubens. Bacchanale (*Hermitage*).

and women clink their glasses while they sing, and bang the metal lids of the coffee-pots, and the rumbling of the stomachs, brought about by the heaps of food, is accompanied by the squalling of indecent babies, in the obstinate chorus of the drunkards and the gossips. Here is nothing but eating, feasting, gluttony, and lechery, in which an innocent old faun, with a shining face, a trembling hide, and a flapping belly, takes part. He has just crossed the threshold of the Flemish houses, for which he deserts the immense poem of the fields and the broad nudities of a mythology less heretical than one thinks: the backs, the bellies shining in the light, and the robust limbs of the women who milk the heavy udders of the goats amid the foliage, the vine branches, and the plowed land.

II

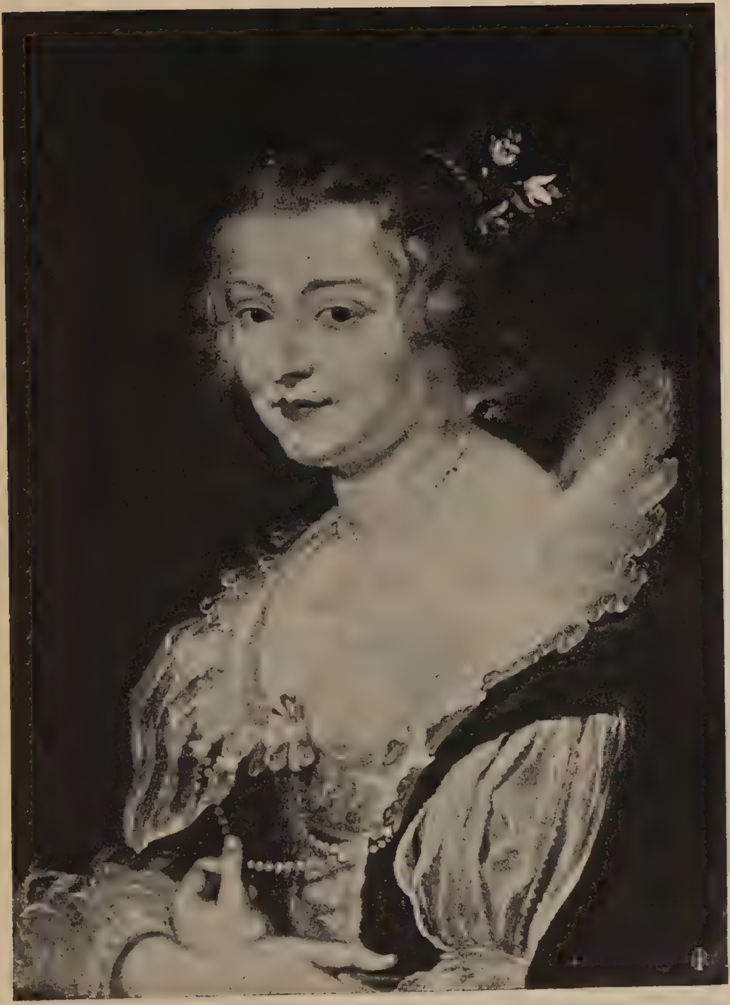
And now, through the most far-reaching lyrical movement that has ever flowed from a painter, through a metaphysical feeling about the universe so evident that it vibrates from one end of his work to the other like the steady sound of a great river whose voice is the same though it reflects a hundred skies, though it bathes a hundred shores, and gives its water to a hundred cities—Rubens rendered divine that mass of animalism which Flemish art would have remained for us if Jordaens alone had lived. He accepted the domination of the elementary forces as if to get a better understanding of them, and guided them from within their very centers of action with the formidable ease of a being who feels his life to be sustained by them and who participates in their life. At the moment when the reorganization of the Churches and the organization of the great nations, contrasting with the anarchy and the vitality of the sixteenth century, were demonstrating the necessity of maintaining political unity in the social body, Rubens, who was very much of his time, who consented to place his genius at the service of monarchical centralization and of the religious Restoration—Rubens was affirming, as the century before had done, the eternal quality in the animal forces and the immortal presence of nature in the hearts of the heroes.

He is the central fire that will fuse, in a fruitful equilibrium, the Renaissance and the modern world. The plastic arabesque had been, with the Italians, the especial instrument for expressing the instinctive need to unite dispersed individual energies and for expressing the desire to establish a general meaning of the structure of the universe. With Rubens the arabesque will find in the roots of instinct itself the inner unity of the world, which the Church and the monarchy are trying to reconstitute from without. It transmits the soul of the philosophers and the artists of the



Rubens. Study, drawing (*Louvre*).

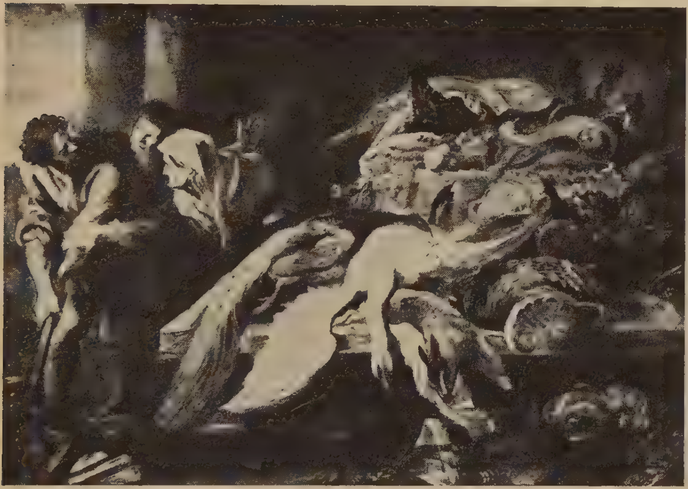
Renaissance to the eighteenth century, whose painters will base their work precisely on that work of the master of Antwerp, and press into the living wave which the arabesque brings to that work, the naturalism of Rousseau, the universalism of Diderot, and the transformism of Buffon and of Lamarck, at the hour when Harvey is describing the circulation of the blood in the arteries and when Newton is born to describe the circulation of the spheres in the heavens. The arabesque is no longer a merely sensual expression as with the Venetians; it is no longer satisfied to ask, as the Greeks did, that the higher forms of a harmonious imagination express in ideal fashion the passage of the forces through balanced volumes, which continue one another and reply to one another. It accepts all the aspects of the world without discussing their nature. The formidable complexity of the sensations accumulated by a thousand years of silence, the vast treasury of forms heaped up by the Middle Ages, and the enormous mass of matter of the north—all this was to be given a sudden headlong movement—without discrimination by the arabesque, which turned it in the direction indicated by the mind of the south. With Rubens it enters the intimate substance of life to stir it to its depths. Heavy with flesh, with earth and air, having the decisiveness of lightning, the undulating line which runs through his pictures in every direction sends back to the depths the movements of their surfaces and determines the surfaces by the movements of their depths: it is the mind itself, governing the sensual flood which nourishes it. Rubens handles the forms of the world as though they were a malleable paste, which one lengthens and shortens, which one reduces or separates, which one drags and distributes throughout the whole work, as a god, recreating life, would impose a new order upon the



RUBENS. Portrait of Helena Fourment (*Uffizi*).

tumult that life would have as it issues from him. Everything in life is evolving. It is simply a force in incessant transformation which germinates and expands and dies in the infinite world of forms, allowing no chance for the mind, which is aware of all this, to arrest its movement between the forms for a single moment or to isolate it from the complex ensemble which all, without an instant of repose, assist in forming and in destroying. Whether he paints myth, history, landscape, the market, sport, fighting, or portrait, Rubens has no other subject than the indefatigable pursuit, through a thousand symbols, of nature in action, of the dynamism of life, whose immense river sweeps through him without his ever being able to exhaust its overflowing waters and without any decrease of his power through his attempts to exhaust them.

Everything that came before his eyes during his whole superb existence became an element, at once fiery and docile, of his unified and dramatic conception of nature. Never did he study anything for itself, for the moral and material life which radiates from any object when one studies its secret life. The human face, for example, which he knew well, which he handled as a sculptor kneads his clay, from which each day he drew his unerring effects of sentiment—the human face never interested him for the external or the profound character which it might have revealed to him. It was of little importance to the constructor of worlds what happened under foreheads other than his own and what the eyes, fixed on his, revealed of an enigma foreign to his own. Human eyes and human foreheads entered the symphony like an instrument which he knew how to make resound, at the place and at the minute when he desired it to resound. When a gust of feeling caused him to stop for a moment in the miraculous voyage which he was making among the forms, surrounded as he was by matter and by mind, cleaving his victorious passage amid flesh and amid trees, dragging earth and heaven after him; when he looked at a woman's face or a flower or a cloud with a concentration that stopped him in his course—he recovered himself so quickly, he surrounded his distraction with

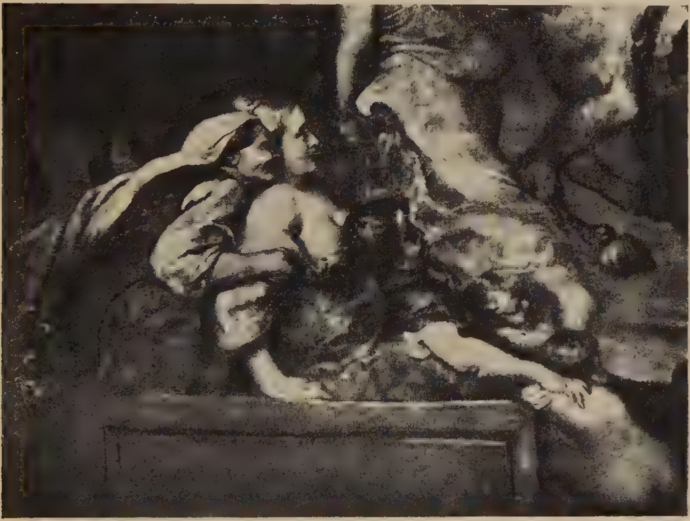


Rubens. Philopoemen (*Louvre*).

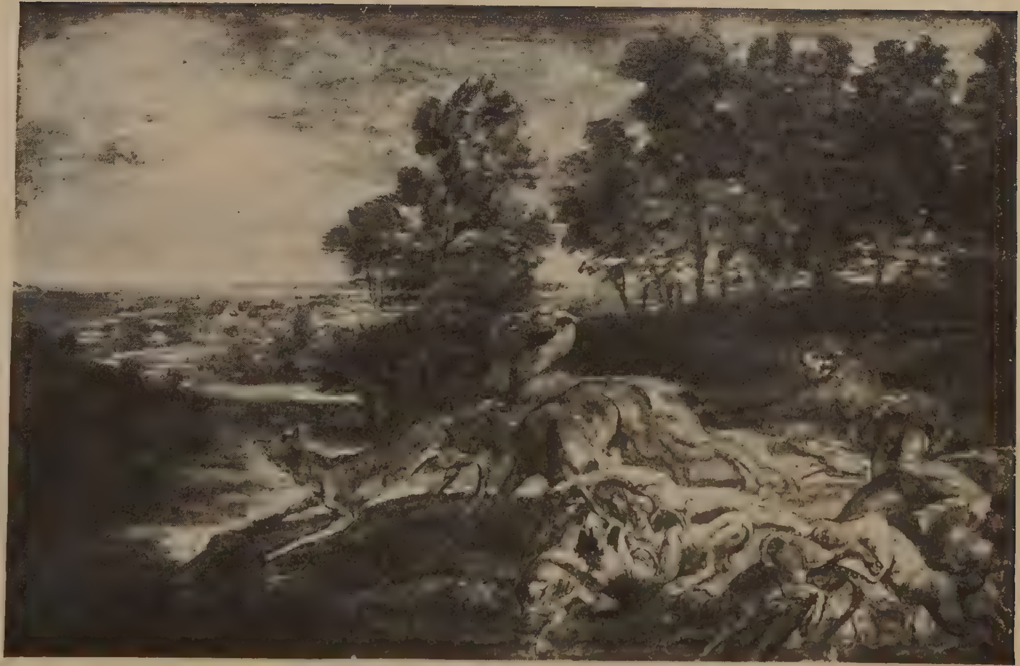
such a display of orchestral sonorities, that it was no more than a single voice in the chorus, mingling with the others and lost in the furious tumult of oratorical exaltation. His universal tenderness veiled his hours of abandon. Like those who love everything that lives, everything that dies, everything that is, he seemed indifferent to the intimate dramas of the heart. He had no time to stop to choose. He opened his breast to all.

The mind which directs and maintains this whirlwind of life in a circle as sure as the gravitation of the heavenly bodies, rolls with it from form to form as if their very intoxication were producing the lucidity of that mind. Wine and the juice of meats and of fruits circulate through matter with lyric movement to give to the skin its red, to put saliva on the lips, to return into the soil with the stamping of feet, to evaporate into the air with the sweat that forms in drops, to pass into children with the milk from blue-veined breasts, to enter the animals through the grasses which they crop and the bones and debris which they devour, and to pass once more into man through meat and bread. And humanity, whether it loves or eats or drinks or breathes the air and the sunshine of heaven, whether it lies down or walks upon the earth, participates consciously in the universal exchange; and if earth ferments, if unhealthful vapors crawl, if the salubrious wind rises to twist the trees and make them creak, if the clouds carry through space the water that has been drunk up from the flanks of the soil, if the streams sink into subterranean caverns that they may cause a spring to murmur among the distant grasses, we know it when we observe a breast swelling above the curve of an arm, or a back mottling as the blood flushes its fat and muscle, or a mouth opening under a tuft of red beard, and the furious movement of a hand that takes, offers, or threatens is re-echoed to the very horizon.

This man had the right to love all the aspects of matter, putrefaction, and life, since he mingled the mind with putrefaction as well as with life, and since it is the mind that gives their movement to both. He had this right because he saw that life is born from putrefaction, that putrefaction germinates in life, and that life and putrefaction pass steadily from any point in space to all the others. Never did an artist have within him to that degree the sensuality, always present, and renewed and insatiable, which is to be ranked with sacred things because it indicates to us—at every step that we take, every time that we open our eyes or our nostrils, or that we listen to the great murmur about us—the constant solidarity which binds us with everything that is and which causes us to assimilate ceaselessly everything that is, in order to carry it up to our creative brain and give it back to men in co-ordinated images. He could not conceive an object separated from the others. His immobility turns to movement and his coarseness becomes radiant because he knows no bit of space but has its echo everywhere, no fraction of time that does not continue within himself, because he has never viewed anything in nature without seeing higher forms germinating inces-



Rubens. Entry of Henri IV into Paris, detail (*Uffizi*).

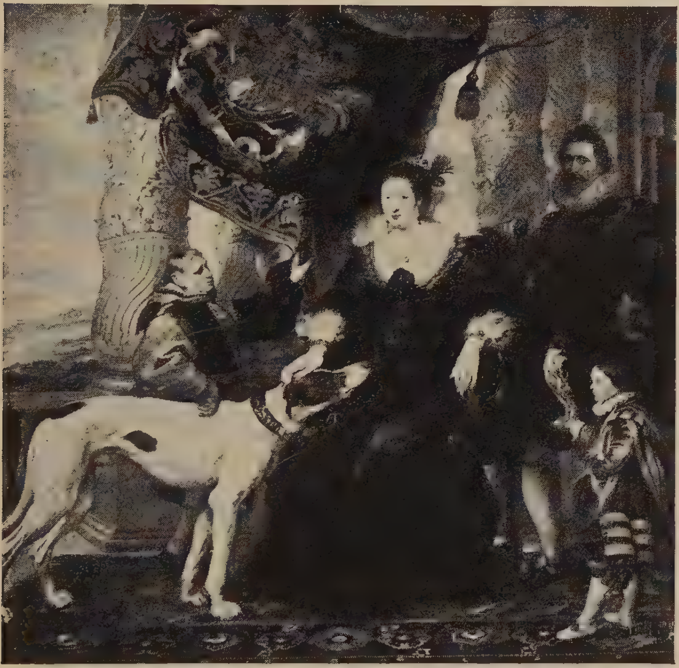


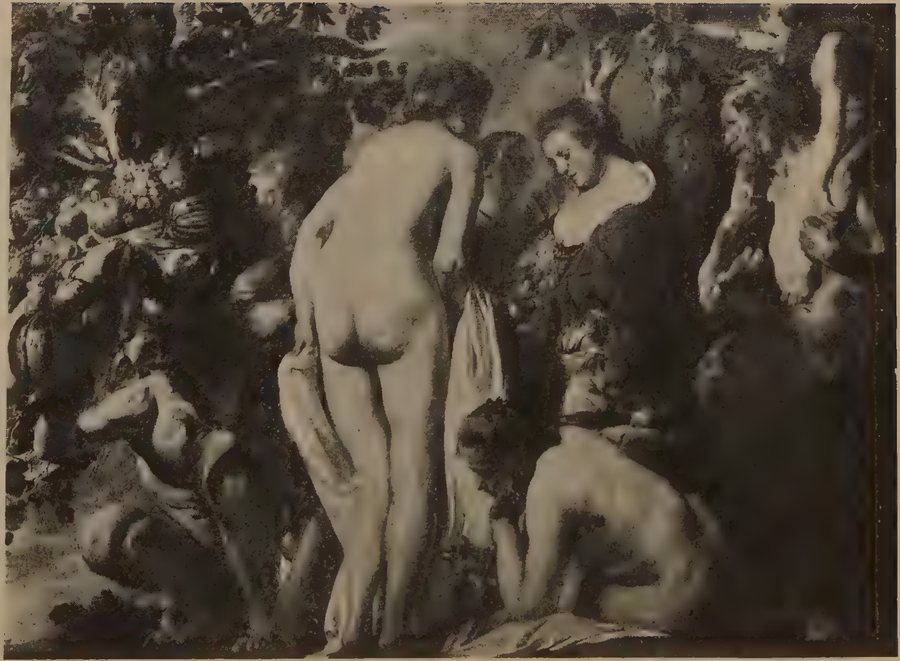
RUBENS. The hunt (*Antwerp*).

santly from common forms and without discerning in a bestial gesture a harmonious movement. He descends into the charnel house or lifts himself above it at will, at a single flight; and when he descends into the charnel house, he has, on the feathers of his wing, a reflection of the sun, and when he mounts he has flesh and blood in his talons. Without other transition than the play of values, the continuity of volumes, and the echo of tones, he passes from the profile of a bosom as full as a ripening fruit to a hanging breast, from a belly cut by folds to a luminous and hard belly, from the face of an old man with flabby skin to a woman's face whose pearly skin is flushed with blood, from flesh shot through with flame to dry bones, from a limpid brook to a muddy pool, from a sky all of silver to abysses of darkness. But the same wave circulates everywhere, swelling out the forms of youth when the withered forms are about to dissolve in it to make young forms again, absorbing the withered forms with the voluptuousness which it drew from the young forms. In the symphonic movement, the wail of the violincellos is never veiled by the stridence of the brasses, the sonorous wave joins despair and hope, and the weight that causes it to descend is balanced by the one that causes it to rise.

This man from whom, for two centuries, all the painters will come forth is yet the ruination of theories and schools. Life carries him along without his having the time to stop and give its final formula. With him it is a perpetual dawn; he is never without order and lucidity, but he is tireless in breaking every frame that he himself has made in order to overflow its borders, and with such abundance that as he advanced in age and rose into the light it seemed that the forms pressed themselves together ever more densely so that he might have the joy of triumphing over their disorder with greater ease and ardor. There have been loftier characters, subtler intelligences, more passionate natures—there has never been such a harmonious ensemble of all the essential faculties which make up the superior man. In his magnificent life of a king of art, he appears simple and good, steady in his relationships, full of cordial nobility and of affability, and quite without anything incomplete or bitter. He had no need of heroic character, for he was too well balanced to abandon his strength for the charms of honors and of women. He had no need of an exceptional profundity of mind, for the images of life organized themselves in him naturally, according to the rhythm they take as they pass through our senses, and because he created with the ease of a rutting animal. He had no need of an uncompromising passion because everything powerful or comprehensive in the Europe of his time smoothed his path for him without his having to demand it.

That fire, that inexpressible movement, that unbridled transport of passion which one sees in his slightest sketches was no more than the passage through him of universal life, forever whirling him forward without his making any effort to summon it to him and without his being able to restrain it. It was from him that there poured forth those trees twisted by flame, those torrents of light and shadow, that moving modeling which sculptures and rolls the fat flesh, knots and unties the muscular limbs whose embraces seem to bring his mind into being, those full breasts of women, those heavy udders of the cow from which he sucked life, those overflowing still-life pieces, those fish, meats, and pumpkins, those fruits of the earth and of the trees which he brings streaming down or which he crushes upon his canvas with sunlight and blood. What did it matter if he addressed himself in the language desired by this century to the most conventional century, the one most fascinated by fine speaking and oratorical emphasis, and if, in order to stir it, he employed the melodramatic means which it demanded of him, eyes reddened by weeping, prostrate bodies, supplicating hands, people kneeling theatrically, and athletic cadavers hung from crosses? The boiling torrent of life swept the theatrical attitudes along in its ascendant power, and they disappeared in it as the gestures of singers are effaced when five hundred musicians accompany their voices. The sonorous


Rubens. The Earl of Arundel and his wife (*Munich*).



JORDAENS. Fecundity (*Brussels*).

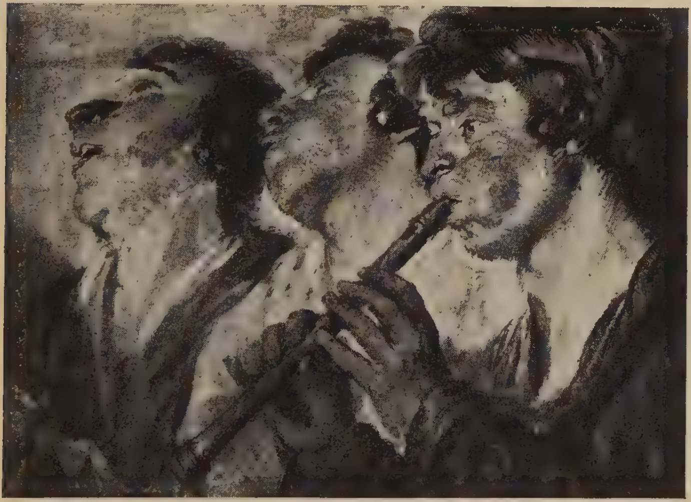
wind blowing caused the mantles and draperies to flap, tearing them from shoulders too broad and from settings too pompous, when they masked the blue perspective of the plains stretching away through vapors to the horizon with the curve of the earth, and set in movement by their wandering mists, by their volcanic undulations, and by the wind which blew across them. He had appeared between Rabelais and Bossuet and embodied them both to the tenth power. He drew after him in his train such masses of fat and grease, of ruddy flesh into which the hand could plunge, of unbound blond hair; such elastic surfaces of bare backs, of heavy hips spread out in the light; such heaps of fruits, of vegetables, and of pungent boughs of apple trees and bitter boughs of oak—that, in order to bring this ocean of matter into the modern world, he had to assume the solemn gestures and the bands of lace of the masters of the pulpit and of the confessors of kings. He served the banquet of the century in his own silver vessels, amid brocaded hangings and tall armchairs already occupied by lords in court dress, by women in décolleté, and by grandiloquent bishops. But he had seen the blood flowing through the bluish veins of the beautiful breasts that were offered to his eyes; he had seen the august jaws cracking bones, and the fruits, which he threw with both hands upon the table amid the meats, were moist with dew and swollen with sugar and with juice.

He maintained in his life and transmitted for our need of unity and of rhythm the substance amassed by the Middle Ages and the order introduced into the mind by the Italian masters. In surface and in depth, he mingled and interwove living nature with the continuous lines which for him represented its direction. His influence was enormous, it still endures, it has become a part of our activity for all time. But he had exhausted life for more than a century; the painters of Europe after him appear stricken by a sort of lethargic stupor from which neither Watteau nor Goya could tear them away, and which the France of the nineteenth century alone managed to shake off.

Flanders especially was crushed by it. Aside from Breughel, who is a complete realization and who moreover marked out his path, the whole sixteenth century of Flanders seems to have had no other function than that of announcing Rubens. The sons and the nephews of Breughel had gathered only a few brilliant flowers from the borders of the terrestrial Eden which Rubens entered alone, cutting the harvests, shaking the fruit trees, drawing after him the animals he dominated in order that he might feed upon their flesh or flatter them with his hand, and dazzling the women he loved without letting himself be conquered by them. When he had entered this garden, all the others picked up the grains and the leaves which he let fall unnoticed at each step, because his two arms were fully laden and because, although he was capable of absorbing all that he carried or of decorating his magnificent house with it, he knew too well that, so far as he was concerned, the branches, the ears of corn, and the flanks of the women would not be exhausted. When death laid him low amid the vines, his two feet upon the soil and his brow in the light which was ripening everything around him that his eyes had seen, the race of pupils that surrounded him, finishing his pictures, living upon his flaming sketches, and gathering up the notes in his albums to decorate a palace—the race of pupils could do no more than despoil him of his mantle and force open his fists, still filled to overflowing. Eden was dead with him.

III

Jordaens himself, so strong and so free, could not escape the overpowering memory of him. But at least he illumined his soul with the flame of Rubens instead of gathering up his bones. He brought even more sun into the flesh of his big women, he caused more blood to flow under their skin, they radiated a greater amorous power, and he discovered in himself, as he watched the passing of the god who opened upon life his two generous hands, rustic poems which he had barely suspected. He saw fauns, their hoofs clotted with mud, sitting in Flemish cottages into which cows and chickens came behind them; he saw the fauns partaking with the peasant of the juice of grapes, and bread rubbed with garlic. He saw more liquid light in the eyes of the girls and more furtive grace in the

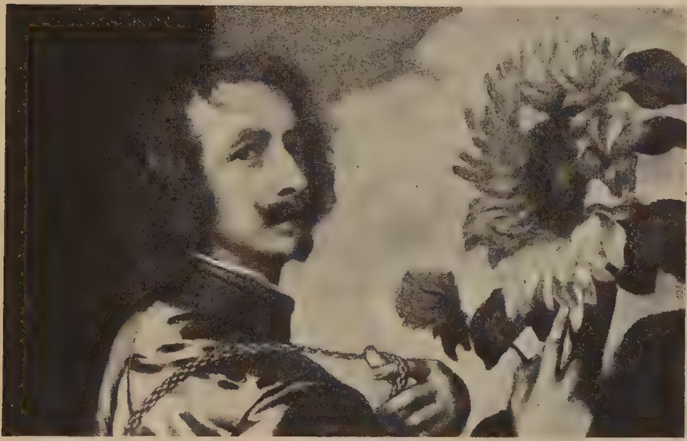


Jordaens. Three Musicians (*Prado*).

smile of their mouths. The spirit of the world passed through him in a broad flash.

The others divided up the universe of Rubens. Snyders gathered into biblical arks the beasts scattered through the three thousand canvases of the hero. Of the immense spectacle of the world into which Rubens had plunged, the skies, the seas, the nude women, the living woods, the springs and the meadows, the marble palaces and the cottages which he had dissolved in the blood of his veins to spread them forth upon the canvas to the beating of his heart, Snyders retained no more than messes of fish and the pork shops of the streets, the palpitation of the pearly bellies, the glistening tremor of the scales, the slimy motion of the great cylindrical bodies, the thickness of the meats, the warmth of fur and feathers heaped up pellmell, an odor of the sea and of clotted blood floating amid the russets of autumn game, and the blues and greens of seaweed and of ocean depths. Even so it was too much for him. Fyt helped him in his work. Crayer, who also delighted in fish, the sea, and the meat of the butcher shop, closed his eyes timidly so as to leave to them this domain, and thought it his duty to confine himself to equestrian portraits, monarchical triumphs and pompous theologies against a setting of twisted colonnades and brocaded hangings. The good painter Jacob van Oost left to him the athletic nudes and the muscular melodramas that he might shut himself up in his dying city of Bruges with the enriched middle class who draped themselves in the mantles and the doublets in which Rubens had dressed his princes as they appeared silhouetted against the grandeur of the skies. Van Dyck seized upon hands and faces, despoiled the soldiers of the harness of war in order to get a better view of their ankles and wrists, and dressed the divinities of pagan Flanders in robes of heavy stuff so as to have a more perverse pleasure in undressing them afterward. Where, before, there had been sureness of gesture, ease of power, superb elegance of force in action, there were now prepared gesture, mannered grace, and the faded elegance taught by the servitude and idleness of courts.

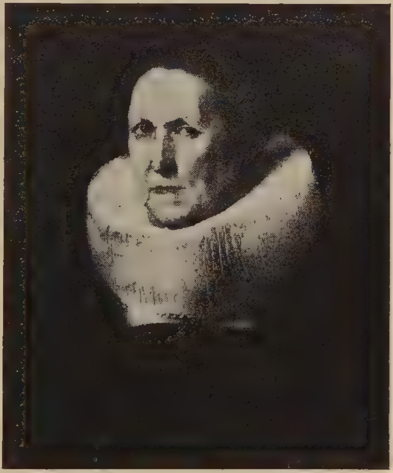
The noble had doffed his armor. He had permitted his stronghold to become a pleasure house; he had given over to the king his bridges and roads in exchange for finely embroidered garments. But deep within him there was still the vigor of a cavalier, even though a touch of corruption was visible at the tips of his fingers and in the pallor of his face. From the south to the north van Dyck's gaze roved with easy and careless penetration. In Italy he discovered, in great sad palaces, the grandsons of a violent aristocracy abandoning itself to its morbid decline. The grandsons of a brutal aristocracy, which was giving up its struggle for power against the merchants, brought him to England.



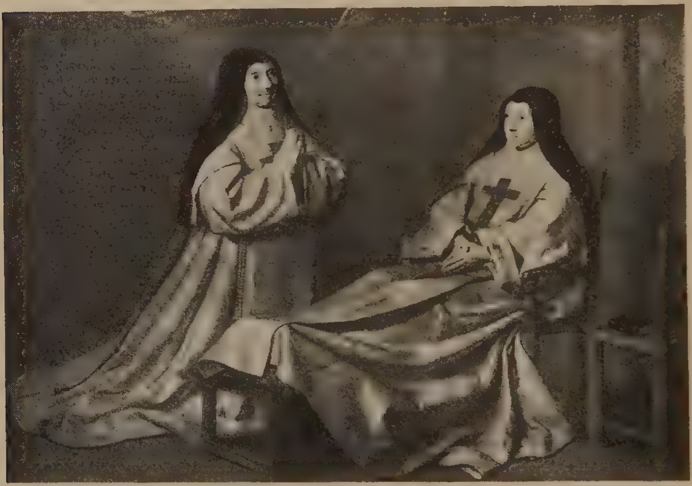
VAN DYCK. Portrait of the artist (*Private collection*).

In the southern country—nervous faces, marked by the inner storm which can no longer vent itself; in the northern country—pale faces with blond hair, long pale hands resting on the hips as men stand in proud resignation when forced to shut up their idle strength in great parks full of leaves rotted by the mist that rises from the lawns drenched with moisture. On every hand, men standing apart from the torrent of the century, isolated in their pleasures, isolated in their boredom. The master had treated with the great; the pupil was treated by the great. His taste, his easy culture, his elegance as of a musketeer, and his dressmaker's talent rendered him indispensable to them. He employed the strength left him by the artificial life of an artist overpraised by idlers and too much loved by women, to become the painter of society and of fashion, the first in date and of importance. For a proud or delicate head outlined against a great living sky, for a fair hand holding a batiste handkerchief, for a flash of comprehension which one day turned a charming and silly face into the incarnate symbol of the old races devoured by their time (which they imagine themselves to have dominated while in fact they have not even tried to understand it)—he frittered away a talent already weary from playing with doublets, from trying on gloves and then tossing them carelessly aside, from turning lace into foam, from the madcap elegance that made him don his broad-brimmed hat with its waving plume, from pointing out the toes of feet shod in soft leather while his hand rested on a tall cane and he twirled his mustache.

Perhaps he did not understand that successes and pleasures sucked his pale blood little by little, and if he suffered, it was because he felt his decline without knowing its causes and without being able to win back his strength. Like all sensitive beings who have become men of pleasure, he is sad. There are more blacks and grays in a single one of his canvases than in all those of Rubens. He never knew the sensual joy which that master lavished everywhere. He never had his broad pagan faith, nor any other to replace it. In his religious pictures, his insinuating and insipid sensualism is the mark of his full consent to be the painter of the Jesuits whom Rubens had served, indeed, when he filled the churches with enchanting virgins, which they ordered from him, but whom he had profoundly combated when he upheld, contrary to their beliefs, the revolutionary force of life and carried it across his century. Van Dyck flattered the convenient devotion of those who no longer believe. Through his religious pictures he consented to play the rôle in Flanders—with more grace and more frequent evasions, it is true—which Bernini was to assume in Italy with noisy grandiloquence, Lesueur in France with insipid sweetness, and Murillo in Spain, with his dubious and unhealthy sensualism. Philippe de Champagne, who was about of his age, was forced, in order to maintain his position against the tendencies of the century, to make a severe and continued effort, and more so because he had received, as van Dyck himself had, the pagan education of the old Flemings and saw on the horizon of his

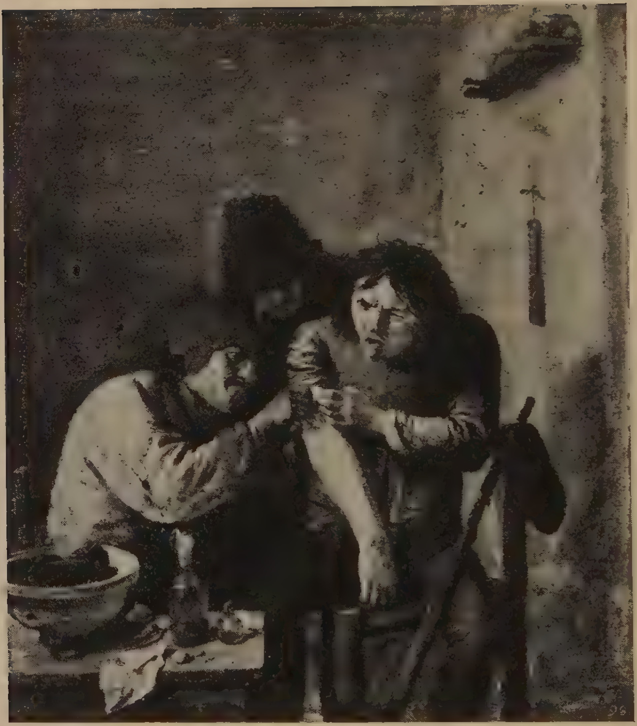

VAN DYCK. Portrait (*Lille*).

youth the tumultuous passing of Rubens. With one of those sudden breaks of equilibrium which only the great mystics can force upon themselves, he forgot even the joy of painting, which is the whole reason for existence of the masters of his country. He fixed his eyes upon the wooden crucifixes nailed to the bare walls of the Jansenist cloisters. He painted flesh clothed in gray fustian; he covered with cold ashes the kneeling portraits of the martyrs of Christian doubt. Rubens had conquered without a struggle, without even feeling their fetters, because his life swept everything along, the impedimenta of the allegories and the need for dogmatic demonstration which his time imposed upon him. After his death, we undoubtedly enter a century when art will no longer live—or rather, will no longer try to live—save through formulas, pedagogical preoccupations, theories, and moralizing intentions.



PHILIPPE DE CHAMPAGNE. Nuns of Port-Royal (*Louvre*).

The century, besides, will take as its field of action another soil than that of Flanders, which scarcely sufficed, after the visit of Hercules, to nourish Jordaens. Van Dyck was unable to live there for more than six years of his maturity. Philippe de Champagne deserted Brussels for Paris. Victorious Holland sapped the life of the Low Countries. When she did not send her painters to Flanders—as, for instance, that strange Brouwer who died at the age of thirty-two after haunting the taverns of Antwerp in order to catch sight, among the shadows, of faces filled with joy, grimacing pain, or comical attention as they appeared suddenly, and who was perhaps brushed by the great invisible pinion which was to lift up Rembrandt—she imposed upon the last Flemish artists her most undeniable faults. David Teniers was seized by her love of anecdote and spread forth motionless dances, silent orgies, and dead kermesses in landscapes, gentle and gray. A tremor as of sorrow, pale and cold, passed over the Flemish soil. Its free spaces, where the mists of the Scheldt and of the North Sea had furnished amber and opal to its artists from van Eyck to Rubens, were to burn out completely. Their last flicker vibrates over the battles staged like quadrilles and the burlesque fortresses which van der Meulen humbly offered to the king of France, and over which a few blue and delicate vapors arise amid the slender trees. Flanders had given enough to the world. Her confused life, heavy and rich, her life swelling with blood and sap, drunk with strength and sweating with its odorous fecundity, had caused its spirit to pass, through Rubens, into the veins of the future.



Brouwer. The Surgeon.

The Polder.

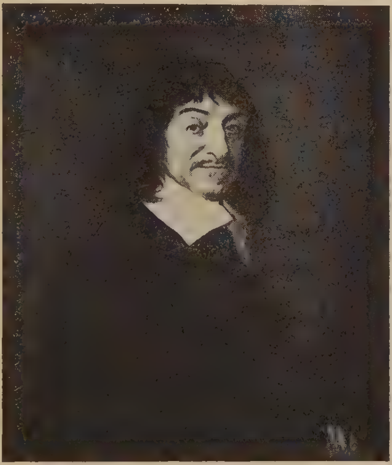
Chapter II. HOLLAND

I

HOLLAND, which borders on Flanders, bears no resemblance to it. From the first, as soon as one approaches the mouths of the Germanic rivers, the aspect of the country changes, the plain descends below the sea-level. Holland devotes itself to stock-raising and agriculture; Flanders to manufacture. And then Flanders remains Catholic and, until the nineteenth century, is subject to foreign government. Holland, from the beginning of the seventeenth century, is Protestant and free. Where Antwerp is swept along amid the attraction of the civilizations of the south, Holland takes possession of herself in a sudden accession of strength which bursts her bonds.

From that moment is to be dated her escape from the despotism of the Renaissance men of the south. The Italians treat their country as a pretext, the artist makes abstractions, he invents, the world solicits him incessantly to find a direction for the appearances which it offers him and to find intellectual value which shall aggrandize the forms whose meaning he desires to generalize and whose sense he desires to follow in order to elevate the race and exalt all its desires. In the wake of the Italians Rubens drags the strength of the north. The Dutch, on the contrary, take their country as their subject. They "paint its portrait." It is the country that they love, because they have suffered in order to gain possession of it and hold it, because it feeds them well, because they have worked to improve it, to clear it up, and to protect it against man and the sea. For ten centuries they struggled to get possession of its mud, to build on it, to set up their towns which will sink into the bog or which an inroad of the sea drowns out in slime and quicksand. Life had been too hard for them, and is now too good for them to seek outside its every-day aspects the education of the mind which it can give to those who live in freedom, in idleness, and in the passionate stimulation of the southern countries—and who are tormented by the needs of an imagination left to itself or whose will power tortures them to restrain its own excesses.

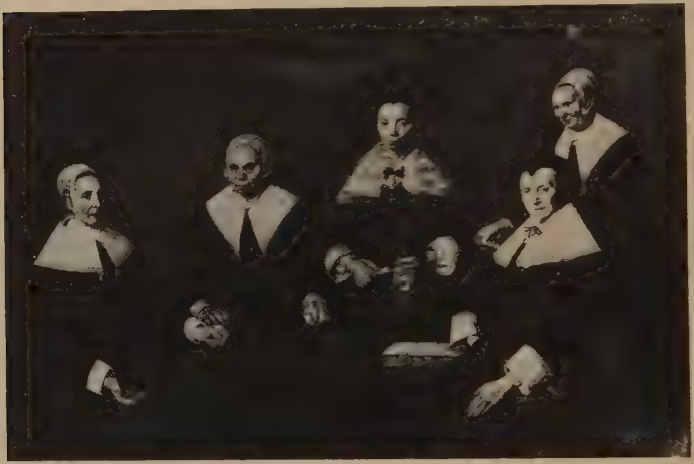
As soon as she had seized her liberty, Holland emerged no more from herself. She does not seem even to have had to struggle to preserve the right to say that which she thought, or rather that which she saw, of herself. She watched herself live. The only thing she did not perceive was the war which she was obliged still to keep up against richer neighbors so that she might be allowed to dry up her polders and found her markets. She was not moved by the spectacle of her heroism; she was not conscious of it. She saw therein a means of winning her right to live as she saw fit, as a busy tradesman, as a careful and clean housewife, loving good food, comfort, domesticated love, fine clothes, and white linen, all of which bore witness to a healthy existence and a self-interested probity. If ever there was a people naturally sociable, of sentiment but slightly complicated, permanently balanced, and which readjusted itself without effort or shock, it is this one. Its greatest man, or rather its one really great man, here appeared like a monster. It certainly made him see that.



Frans Hals. Descartes (*Louvre*).

Holland carried on the practice of painting in the way that she fought, in the way that she carried on and still carries on the practice of trade. With her, that function did not correspond as in other places to a frenzy of conquest which announces itself from afar by feverish tremors and leaves behind it fatigue, sadness, and often death. She began suddenly, she stopped suddenly. It is like the joy of a young animal that snorts and skips, and after becoming aware of its health and its vigor, of the suppleness of its muscles and the depth of its lungs, no longer thinks of anything but grazing. When she no longer knew how to paint, she felt no remorse. Her art had manifested a moment of its power, broad, peaceful, positive, and joyous—and that was all. When art no longer manifested it, this power continued; but instead of expressing itself through color and form, it expressed itself through more ships on the sea, more merchandise in the ports, through a greater number of canals, more solid dikes, and more of well-being everywhere.

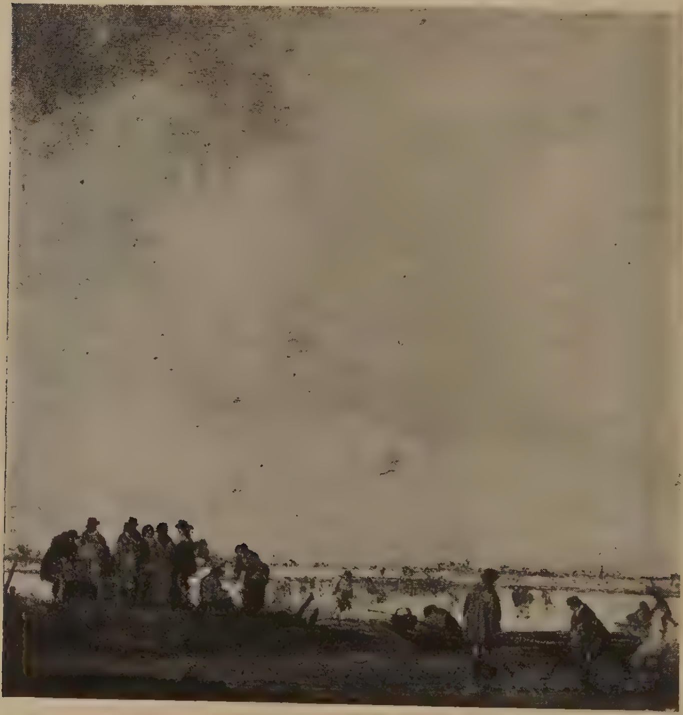
These forces, as has often been said, arose from the magnificent effort which Holland had made to tear herself free from the foreigner. When men for forty years have armed themselves every day to earn their bread for the evening and the right to be alive at dawn, when they have gotten up in the night to go through fierce storms of wind and water in order to slip a torch into the portholes of war-vessels, when they have seen the stake set up for them on every public square and a gibbet at every crossroad, they may, if they have not weakened, regard with pride those who will be born of their valor. All the painters



Frans Hals. The Lady Regents of the Hospital (*Haarlem*).

of Holland were sons or grandsons of the men who had made the Republic. Mierevelt, the first, is born in 1567 on the eve of the insurrection; the last, Hobbema, in 1638, when Spain is quite vanquished, when the Dutch East-India Company floods the ports with produce, when the Netherlands feel themselves sufficiently strong to control their sea whereby they block the Thames with de Ruyter's vessels and hurl that sea through the broken dikes in front of the soldiers of Louis XIV. Between Mierevelt and Hobbema come Frans Hals, van Goyen, Rembrandt, van Ostade, Albert Cuyp, Ruysdael, Terborg, Pieter de Hooch, Vermeer of Delft, and a hundred others. The Beggars of the sea have hurled the power of their fight into the wombs of the women.

To be sure, in this country where everyone may without effort be a painter if he opens his eyes, some men had done painting previously to the two generations which were born of the conquerors. But their voices were isolated and without echoes. In the Holland that was forming, the few little peasants who had been awakened by chance by the great diffused light which floats from the mouths of the Rhine to the dikes of the Zuider Zee, had gone on foot to Bruges, to Ghent, to Antwerp, or to Brussels where peddlers and traders from the coast had told them that those who made pictures for donors and brotherhoods gained a generous livelihood. In the fifteenth century, if van Ouwater, a pupil of van Eyck, did return to The Hague, Dirk Bouts lived at Louvain, Claus Sluter went as far as Dijon, and Malouel as far as Paris. In the sixteenth century, Cornelissen and Mostaert remained at home, but looked to Antwerp; Pieter Pourbus lived in Bruges. Anton Mor served Spain to the point of acquiring her arid strength, her dry ardor, and her somber and nude character. Lucas of Leyden, even if he did not leave his home, was solicited now by Antwerp, now by Germany, which triumphed completely when Dürer came to see him and when they had exchanged their ideas concerning the manner of cutting into copper and wood.



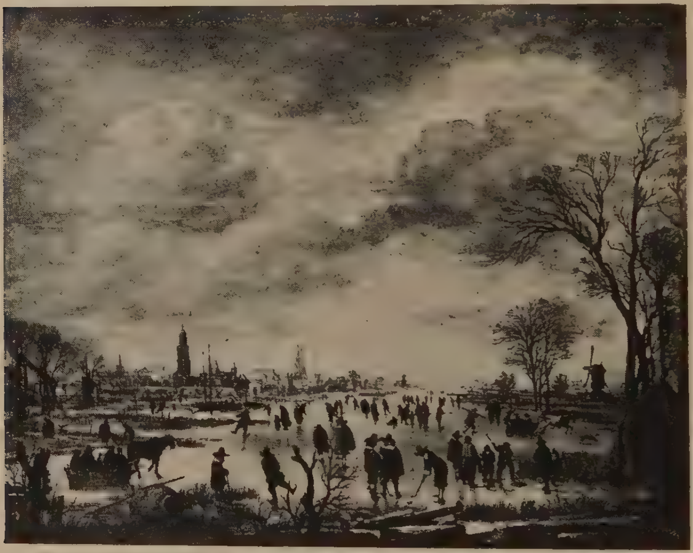
Van Goyen. The Skaters (*Orléans*).

And yet, if there was in Holland, before the war, a genuine Hollander, it certainly was this good engraver of blond landscapes and of the joys of the people in which, at times, the verve of van Ostade is forecast. Had he not died at the age of forty, had he been able to see Pieter Breughel, who had deserted for Antwerp the landscape of Breda over which floats the golden mist from the rivers, we should doubtless have known sooner the face of the Netherlands. But he disappeared at the moment when Italy was becoming the fashion in Flanders, when Jan Scorel was trying to introduce it at Utrecht, when Holland seemed to be accepting Charles V and renouncing the pride of seizing liberty.

The insurrection which put the Netherlands into possession of their independence was so thoroughly significant of their maturity of mind that painting, though scarcely born, made itself completely master of its means. Between the sons of the insurgents and the first Dutch painters who were looking toward Italy and Flanders, there is a half century of silence. Holland has no primitives, even less than Venice. The painters of the brotherhoods are already modern men. Frans Hals, from his first work, is a great painter; he knows all the laws of plastic polyphony, he has freedom, ease, a powerful and direct feeling for the permanent and complex solidarity of form, color, consciousness, and space; and, from his first moment, he is a Hollander. And thenceforward, neither with him nor with any of those who are to appear, will one find a trace of those Italian rhythms with which Rubens and his successors animate the matter of the north. Dutch art is of a single block, remains until its last hour within the material and moral limits of Holland, and, from the beginning to the end, reveals the inner forces brought violently to the light by the revolution. It is the most strongly and uniquely national affirmation that history has to show.

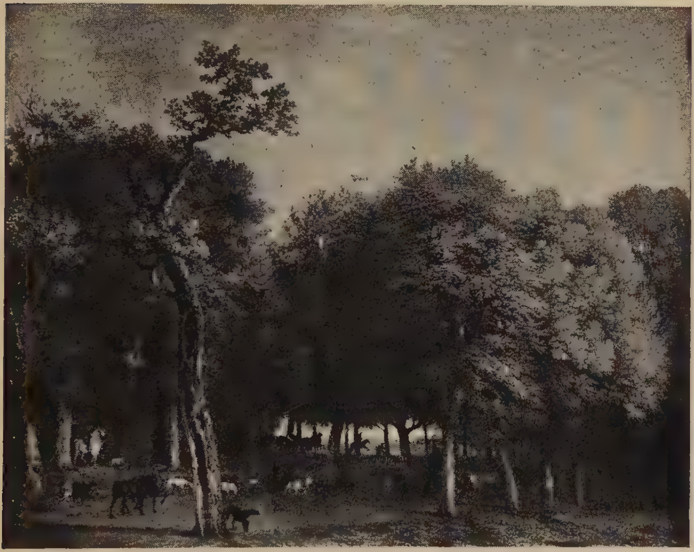
II

The artists who were born every day and everywhere from the energy of the revolt, behind the shoulders of the dikes whence one sees only the sky, and on the banks of the canals where the sails pass against the hedges, had the desire to paint almost as soon as they opened their eyes. But only to paint. Not to imagine or to demonstrate, not to seek, beyond the life of the senses, for the world of ideas that it contains, but to paint—to fix the shadow of the sails on the water, the shafts of sunlight in the mist, the black and white spots of the cattle in the polder, or the blue nets that dry in the forest of the masts. And when they were called to the large commercial cities, where the middle class, enriched by trade and consolidated by victory, was broadening its ranks, they brought with them, cool and fresh, the harmonies of their sky. Besides, the waterways which ran through the country crossed and recrossed in the cities, amid the houses of brick and glass;



Van der Meer. The River in Winter (*Amsterdam*).

the big full-bellied boats discharged upon the narrow docks the flour, the milk, the butter, the fodder, and the flowers which they brought from the fields. And then the west wind, blowing over the lacy gabled roofs, the canals, the short bridges, and the plane trees of Amsterdam, Leyden, Delft, Dortrecht, and Haarlem, carried with it the same great clouds which poured upon



Paul Potter. The Wood at the Hague (*Berlin*).

the low plains the water with which they are so gorged that most of the mills turn to relieve them of it.

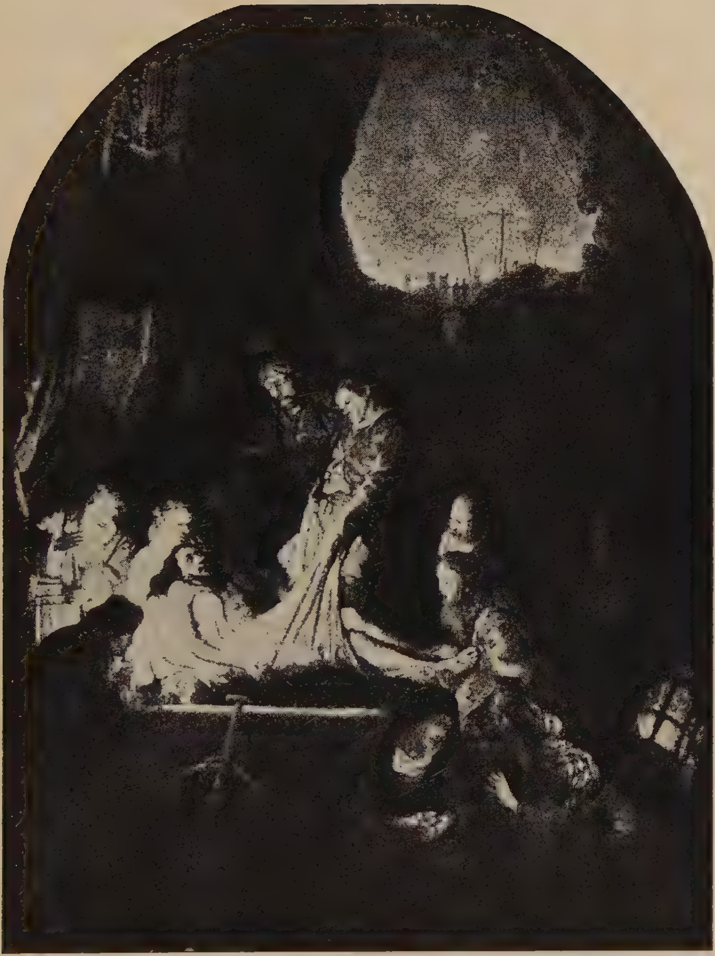
The peaceful pride of having won the right to live at their ease urged the solid Dutch middle class to utilize at once and for their profit, that desire for painting which the rising generation was impatiently manifesting. They enjoyed their wealth, and in every way they could. Already they were no longer the rising Holland of the solid black effigies of old Mierevelt, nor even the severe assemblies which Ravesteyn, another painter of brotherhoods, was furnishing at the same period, and still less the attempts which Cornelis Tennissen made under the reign of Spain, a half century earlier. Now, when the civic guards, who were fortifying or reorganizing their companies everywhere, went forth to practice with the arquebuse, they hung their rapiers from silken scarfs, they put great waving plumes on their felt hats, and they unfurled embroidered standards. No mere boastful display was this, but the joy of fortune acquired by the calm strength which they retained amid the greatest perils. They were strong men. War, commerce, orgy—nothing disturbed their innocence. When returning from exercise they ate and drank as one eats and drinks when one is rich, when one leads a powerful life, when one breathes sea air and has walked in the mist that rises from the damp pasture land. A silent complicity was being brought about between them and those charged with painting them. Some, to tell the truth, did not understand them entirely; others too well. They did not pardon Rembrandt when he took it upon himself to take possession of them like a material that one works upon and bends at will to identify it with one's being, to knead it with light and gold and recast it into life as if it were another life that was to be mingled therewith, even though, in its passing, he caused the lightning of the mind to flash forth. When van der Helst dressed them in satin, placed them before him in their magnificence, all in front view, all of equal importance and quite proper despite their beer mugs and their weapons, they were so well satisfied with the painter who reproduced them so faithfully and so splendidly, that we cannot help considering him a little too much like themselves. Frans Hals, on the other hand, gives them just the value which we set upon them, or rather it is through him that we know their value. Never has there been better painting than his, never has the surface of life been expressed with greater simplicity and power, nor has the order of importance of the elements which reveal life to our eyes been more accurately assigned.

When he had passed the evening in exchanging blows and coarse words with his wife and the night in waiting for his wine to settle, one would have said that on the following day his mind was clearer, his hand firmer, his eye more fit to seize the moving harmonies that entered his studio with the spice-dealers, the money-changers, the brewers, and the drapers returning from their arquebuse shooting, and with the broad oppositions by which he introduced into painting a source of life so savory that he exhausted it to its depths. This drunkard flooded with fire everything he touched with his brush. Doubtless, between two sittings, he sat down also to the banquet table, amid those red-faced strong fellows with their hair cut in a

Quellin the Elder. High Relief from the front of the Palace of Amsterdam.

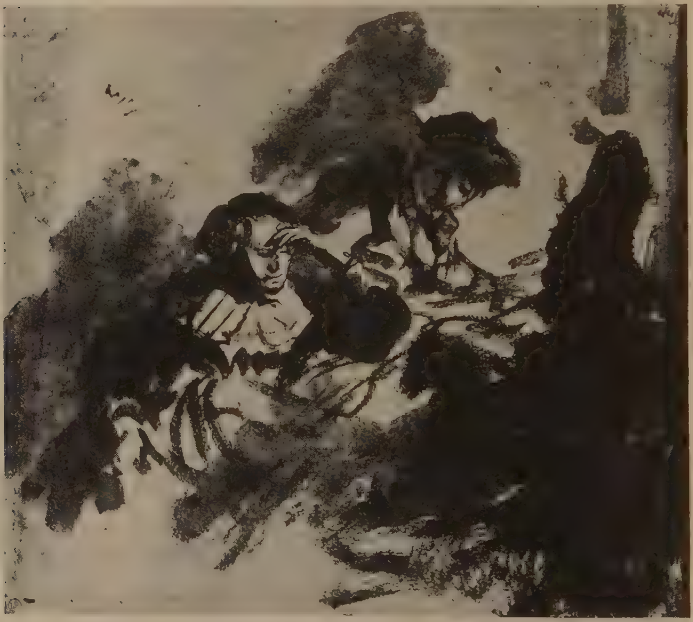
brush, their short, pointed, blond beards and their upturned mustaches. And when the faces had reached a point where they were round and full, when they reflected the joy of the well-filled stomachs and the easy digestions, sword belts were strapped on again, felt hats were donned, the big silk bows that crossed jacket and doublet were puffed out. Then the blue, orange, and red scarfs, the green plumes, the black cloth, the fluted ruffles of collars and cuffs, the silky undulation of the banners, hung in disorder over the tables or carelessly folded to mingle their colors, everything seemed to receive—through the fists grasping the spear shafts, through the temples swelling under the shadow of the large hats, through the hands pouring red wine and receiving it in crystal glasses—the wave of hot blood which rolled in their arteries.

When he was seeking the colored surfaces of the world, Frans Hals painted the ruff of a collarette or the fringe of a scarf with as much delight as he would the radiant smile of a servant girl, the burst of gayety of a blond youth, or the full-blooded face of a civilian officer. But this great virtuoso changed, which is not frequent with virtuosi. It seems that after his sixtieth year a kind of remorse seized him. Was it perhaps that he had become intimate with Descartes of whom, at about that time, he painted the portrait which showed so clearly the restless and obstinate spirit of the philosopher? Was it perhaps that the poverty in which he died in the almshouse and his intercourse with old men and sick men had constrained him to look within himself and in consequence to turn upon the outer world eyes that were more clear sighted? Suddenly one sees his palette, not darkening—it retains all its limpid splendor, its transparence, its frankness—but suppressing all the intermediary notes of the keyboard, bringing to black and white (both infinite



Rembrandt. The Entombment (*Munich*).

in shades, pitch, and sonority) the whole expressive repertory of the colors of nature. Is there more "soul" elsewhere than in his "Regents," or especially in his last picture, the "Lady Regents," which he paints at the age of eighty-four, when he is no longer sure of his hand? All painters know well that the word has no meaning unless one employs it with reference to the quality of painting. But sometimes, it is true, old men learn; they humble themselves, they confess that they have not understood or that they have understood imperfectly; they return to the school of nature, through the door of the heart. Almost all the masters have known that second innocence and have perceived



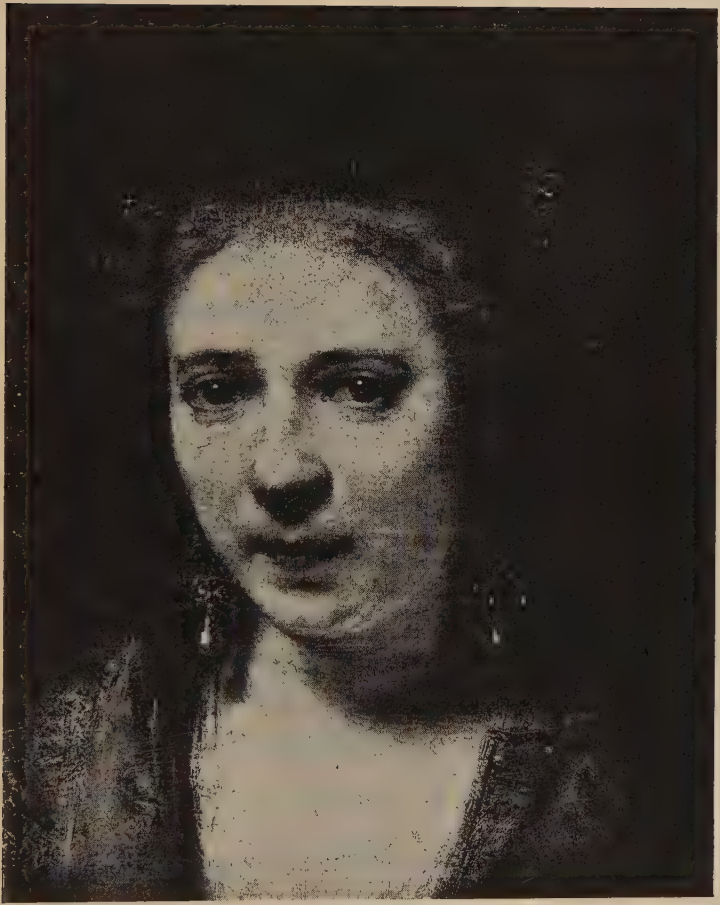
REMBRANDT. The Lesson, drawing (*Private collection*).

without apprehension that they have felt themselves becoming unskillful once more. Titian presented that great spectacle; we shall meet it again with Rembrandt and also with Velasquez. The surface of the world seems to efface itself from their eyes, and if the spirit of the forms appears to them more clearly, it is not that the spirit departs from the forms; it is that the master has discovered, on the contrary, the constant solidarity of the forms and of the spirit, because the inner logic of life imposes itself on him and because the accidental recedes in the measure that he understands the law. That is what impresses us when we see the last work of him who was, until nearly the end, the most exterior of painters. There is nothing attractive in what he views: an austere room in an almshouse, aged hands, aged faces, and the growing shadows of the days, the end of these lives and of his own; but matter and thought are now no more than a single thing all the more beautiful because when he knows where strength lies his hand weakens.

It was only natural that the painters of Holland, when sixty years old, should paint the portraits of these five or six grave personages, clad in black and white, and assembled around a table. They were aging at the same time as their sitters. Those who had seen war and made war, those who, in their maturity, had engaged freely and without disquietude in military exercises, commerce, and the pleasures of the table and of love, considered it proper, when their skin had lost its freshness and was hardening and becoming gray, to turn to philanthropy and administration. The old merchants and their wives busied themselves with good works. Each age has its pleasures. And Holland is a wise nation which, without difficulty, reconciles good living, the hierarchy of the bodily functions, and the social order that like the others is rooted in the economy and evolution of the country, with the Commandments of the Scriptures. And it is very fortunate that it is so, for this gives to art, which has recounted to us her life, that steadiness, that peace, that powerful tranquillity which presents a contrast, so perfect and so instructive to the mind, with the fever and pain concealed in Mediterranean art. All those who, before and after the "Syndics" of Rembrandt and the "Lady Regents" of Hals, painted those solid reunions of figures on which the materialism of commerce and the equanimity of soul, which comes from physical and moral health, had left their mark until the coming of wrinkles and white hair—Verspronck, Thomas de Keyser, Santvoort, Flinck, Elias, Jacob van Loo, and Jan de Bray especially—had so complete a vision of that society that one feels they approved of it, and one understands, when one sees them, that no external shock could have disturbed their harmony with it. Rembrandt apart, they are in no way different from those who posed before them. Social Holland is a magnificent work of art in itself, and one cannot object to her artists' accepting their place in the self-satisfied middle class.

III

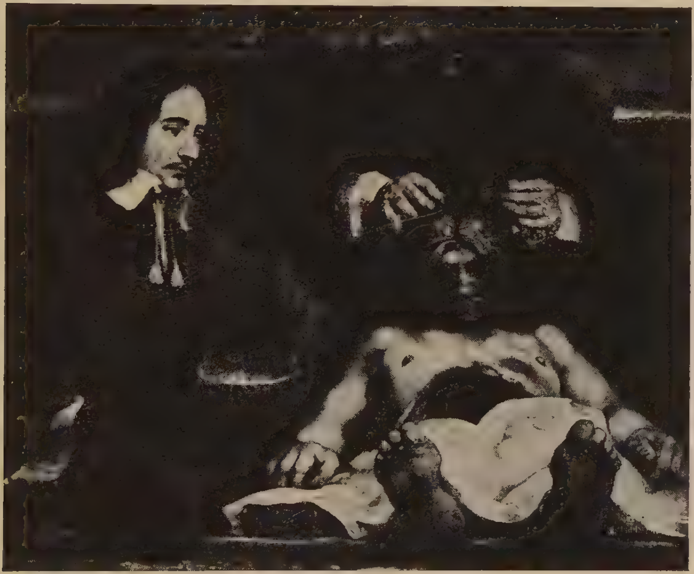
The close resemblance of these painters to that which they represented enables one to understand why the eyes of those who see in the work of art the image of historical and geographical surroundings should have invoked their testimony. Van Ostade idled in all the villages, he entered all their houses. He is curious about everything. He goes to sit down at the inn, he enters the kitchen, he goes down to the cellar, he explores the barnyard. He peeps through a shutter to watch the children at school. When a fiddler sets the lads and



REMBRANDT. Portrait of Hendrickje, detail (*Louvre*).

lasses dancing under the plane trees of the square, he hurries to the door and installs himself in the front row. Every time that the dentist or the barber operates, he is there. All inert things—an old vat, an old tub, a broken earthenware pot, books on a shelf, plates, bottles, the pellmell in a studio, a kitchen, a tavern, a forge—are his friends, all of which a ray of the sun from the window, the reflection of a hearth where roast fowls are turning golden in their streaming juice, the sheen from a copper saucepan or from a red-hot iron on the anvil, animate so that they may take part in the affairs, the noise, the silence, the life of the moment. Everything lives, everything has the same right to live and to live unconventionally. People drink, eat, sing, laugh, love, and console themselves in all candor. And if social discipline and the rapidity of intercourse have introduced more restraint into the villages, if their life is less innocent, there is still in the Holland of to-day enough to explain all its artists in the ensemble of their tendencies, and even to describe them in the most minute detail of their realizations. The joyous power of the Dutch temperament in effecting its conquest has declined a little, to be sure, but if the reading of the Bible by the old people is listened to more decorously, it is not more fully obeyed the moment that instinct pierces the crust of hypocritical conventions and the apparent unity of morals. On the feast days of the people and on feast days in the home the same full-blooded health overflows at meals, in gestures, and in speech. The old masters would recognize their race here, and the setting within which its strength expands; for the absolute plain crossed by white sails, the four hundred mills with the red wings that turn around Zaandam, and the space are still there. Van Goyen, for example, is the Low Country itself—a strip cut out from its earth, with a great stretch of sky.

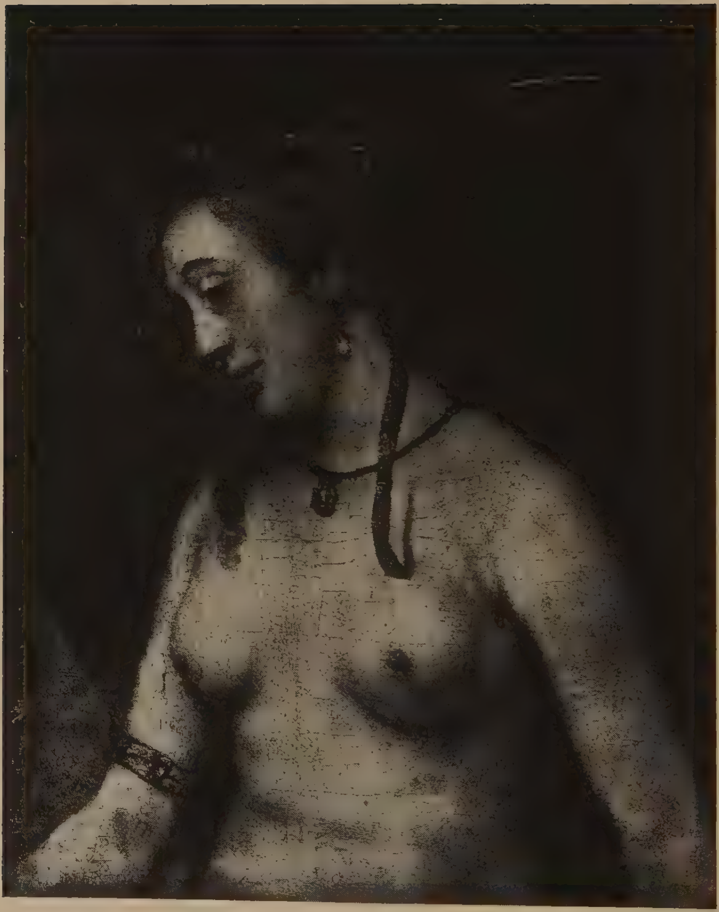
That golden spray of water which bathes everything, those great lingering shafts of sunlight on a corner of a pasture outside of which everything plunges into luminous shadow, those skies filled with white clouds which at the same time allow the light to pass through, and, causing the ground to dazzle with liquid and powdery gold, make us wonder, when we have crossed Holland, whether it was van Goyen who revealed them to us or whether it was the flat country which unrolls from the island of Walcheren to Groningen, and from Amsterdam to Breda. In winter, when the canals and the ponds freeze over, if one goes to see the skaters fly and disappear among the bare trees and the houses capped with snow, one finds him there again, and van Ostade also, and van der Meer of Amsterdam, the



REMBRANDT. The Autopsy (*Amsterdam*).

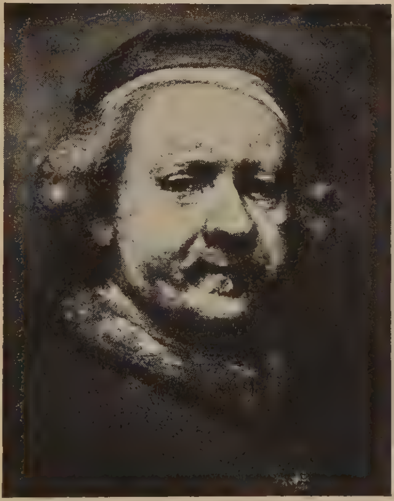
lover of immense horizons—who have all come, blowing on their fingers and stamping their feet, to try to fix the crossing of the little black silhouettes against the uniform whiteness and the pink and icy sky of glittering afternoons. When one has seen the departure of the heavy vessels bending under their sails, their pennants crackling, when one has seen the movements of the waves and the immensity of gray space in which an uncertain golden glow is born, it is because one has looked at the sea in company with the van der Veldes, from the top of the Scheveningen dunes. One knows Paul Potter without ever having met him if one has strolled along some inclosure where the bulls and the cows wander to nourish their blood and their milk from the ever moist grass and the salty wind from the sea. His painting is steeped in the breath of their lungs, in their silvery slaver, in the sweat that evaporates from them, in the humidity from their nostrils; and their hides take on the dull splendor which he gives to the dust-enveloped plain whose transparence grows dimmer little by little without ever vanishing in the vapors that thicken with the distance. All, even the most humble and the most unknown among these artists, have carried into their painting something of the vast opalescent mist in which the slightest spot of color takes on an admirable value. Holland is drenched with water, water rises from the soil and from the sea, water unites the soil and the sea with the sky which one never perceives save through its impalpable veil, which the gold of the sun, the silver of the dew, and the pale emerald of the waves tinge simultaneously or by turns. Every little drop of vapor is an invisible device for reflecting, breaking, and refracting the light. A vast prism floats and transfigures everything and sheds the glory of the daylight upon everything which, away from here, is shadow and darkness—to things which, everywhere else, one does not see or which one conceals.

Confined to his hut by the gloomy days and the long nights of the bad season, the Dutch peasant finds again, when the ice melts, when the earth moves, and when the first shoots pierce the frost, the ever-living enchantment of the rebirth of the world. In the distance melting into the vapor which rises from ditches and canals, the yellow and green pasture land stretches out and mingles with the cattle that graze in herds or lie down on the ground, with the colts that gallop and the sails of the boats and the wings of the mills, gilded or darkened by rays of light or passages of shadow. At times, when the earth is covered with steam, it remains invisible to the height of the grasses, and the animals and objects seem to float over it. Rain and sunlight merge; the nearness of the sea brings about unexpected slanting illuminations; the water, spread out everywhere, gives its liquid depth to the greens, to the blacks, to the reds, and to the blues which the meadows, the fields of flowers, the herds, and the houses scatter throughout the polder, without their ever ceasing to be at once brilliant and blurred in the shining fog. From afar everything appears like a brilliant spot which an uncertain fringe renders iridescent at its edges and then mingles with the air saturated with watery vapor. Form floats. And when the Hollander tries to fix it in sculpture, he seems still to paint rather than to carve. Quellin the Elder has not the sense of clear-cut profiles and well-defined masses. Space engulfs and melts his decorative sculptures. But seen near by, he is Rubens. The modeling moves within the contour, the softly filled planes flee and undulate under the tremble of the flesh. The blood beats in them, the milk rises in them, the light of Holland spreads over them its iridescent mist which is the milk and the blood of its fat pasture land.



REMBRANDT. Bathsheba, detail (*Louvre*).

It was but natural that the eyes of those who live amid this feast of moist shadow and sunlight create anew for the repose and continuity of their sight—in dress, ornament, habitation, and all their domestic objects—that concerning which the spontaneous harmonies of space never cease to teach them. They paint everything—the houses, the mills, the inclosures of the gardens and the fields, the pails, the milk boxes, the casks, and the full-bellied boats which go right into the cities to mingle in the black mirror of the canals their red or green reflections with the multicolored tremble of the clouds, the belfries, the brick façades, the window-panes, and the tiles of the roofs. Along the roads one sees green wagons with orange wheels; blue or green barrels with red hoops are piled up on the barges. The geraniums and begonias with which the windows flower are in earthen pots or painted wooden boxes. When one opens a window or a door painted a turquoise blue, in one of those clean villages where the wind strews the leaves of the plane trees on the flat brick pavement, one catches a glimpse of a room calcimined with yellow or with pure blue. In certain localities they paint even the trees. On their broadcloth suits, or on their velvet skirts, on their neckerchiefs, and on



REMBRANDT. Self portrait, detail (*National Gallery, London*).

their bodices printed with bright colors, the peasants wear silver belts and the peasant women wear clasps and pins of gold. Around their necks all have coral necklaces in several bands, jet necklaces when they are in mourning. In Friesland their headdress is a silver helmet. The ports are full of brick-red sails and blue fishing nets. Until nightfall all Holland is a liquid painting, and evening itself gives to things a depth of color which one scarcely finds again save on the lagoons of Venice, on the dusty plateaus of Castille, or, in certain spring and autumn twilights, in the atmosphere of Paris. One needs to have seen at The Hague, toward the fall of evening, how the white swans absorb all the dying light under the deep trees which gather the silence around the broad sheets of water.

IV

In reality every Hollander is a born painter, and this could not be otherwise. In order that these original gifts may ripen in a few brains and be organized there, it suffices for a moment of enthusiasm or a brief need for effort to stir one or two generations. There is not a country in the world where history and the soil have more directly determined the plastic expression of life. And whatever may have been said of this,[1] Rembrandt did not escape the rule. Only, there must be no misunderstanding. What the thousand painters of Holland take as the subject for their canvases, Rembrandt takes as the element of his visions. Where the others see facts, he seizes secret relationships which identify his supernatural sensibility with the real, and transports to the plane of a new creation everything that he has

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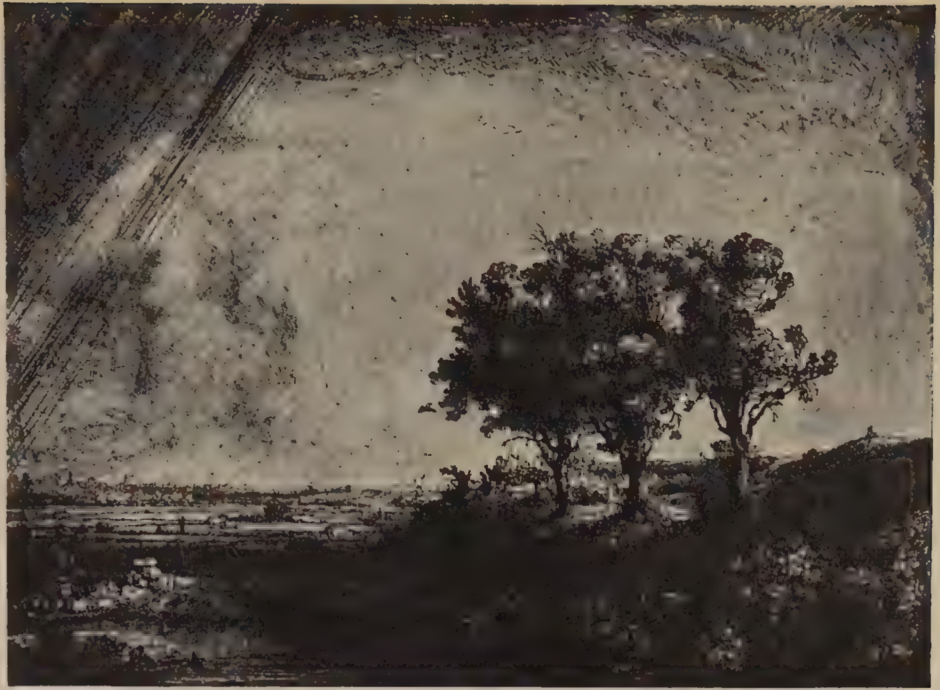
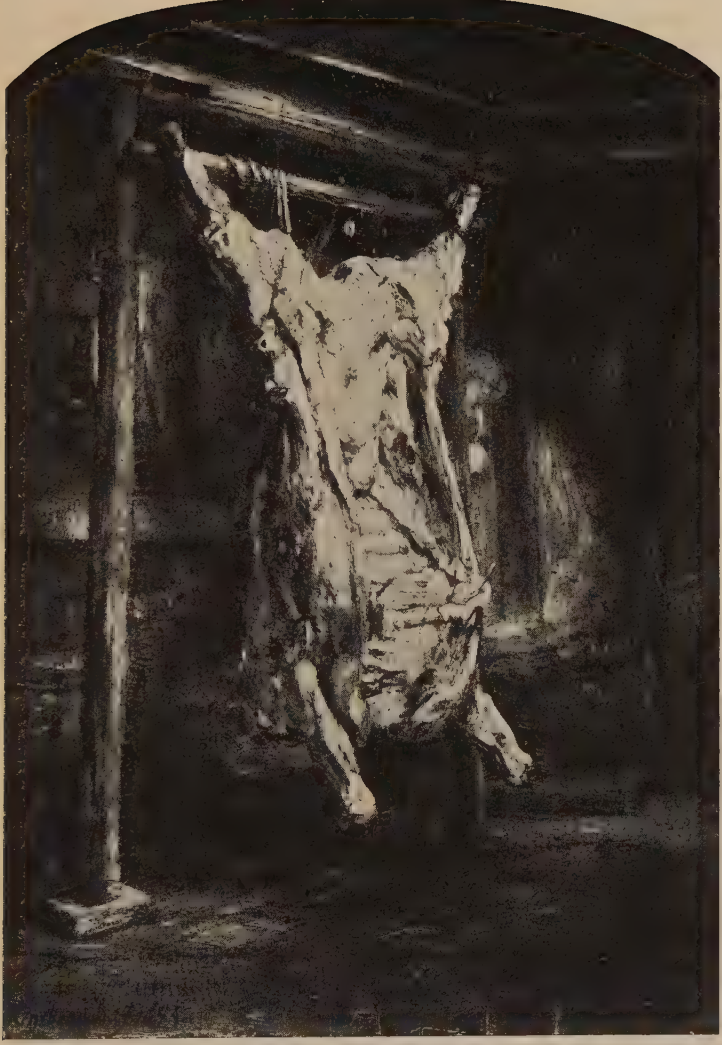
[1] Among others, Emile Verhaeren, who affirms, in his fine book on *Rembrandt*, that the mere fact of the appearance of a heroic genius suffices completely to demolish the theory of environment.



Rembrandt. The Three Trees, etching (*Chantilly*).

religiously borrowed from the Creation we all know. And as those among whom he lives are indifferent to him, as his strange vision passes over the heads of the crowd, he seems to be outside it and even to stand facing it in a state of permanent antagonism. And yet he speaks its language, he tells us about it and thus about himself, who gets from it that which has made him suffer and that which has made him understand. He had to know both its love and its hate before dominating its sentimental passions, the better to accept it as an ever-living necessity and to merge it in himself with the other images of the world and so lift it up with them to the impartial power of his mind.

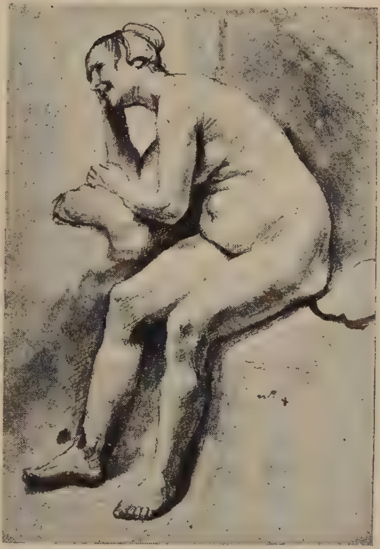
Whence, then, should Rembrandt have taken his gold and his reds, and that silvery or russet light in which the sun and the spray of water mingle, if he had not always lived in Amsterdam, in the most populous and most sordid spot in the city, near the boats pouring upon the docks red rags, rusty iron, pickled herrings, gingerbread, and the royal train of carmines and yellows on the day of the flower market? Through the fermentation of the slimy streets of the Jewish quarter, where colored garments hang from the windows, rekindling with their burning gleams the reddish shadow, he went along the streets of water which lap and reflect the flowered façades and the dyed cloths, until he came to the edge of the Amstel, where, in the flaming evenings of the maritime cities, the big ships were discharging embroidered cloths, tropical fruits, and birds from the islands. Where else should he have gotten his desire for imaginary voyages, for glimpses of distant seas, for that magical Orient which he perceived as a spray, dancing in a shaft of sunlight, when he caused a ray of his light to descend to the deep cellars into which filters the dampness of the canals? And when he entered those dens where the usurers of the



REMBRANDT. The Beef (*Louvre*).

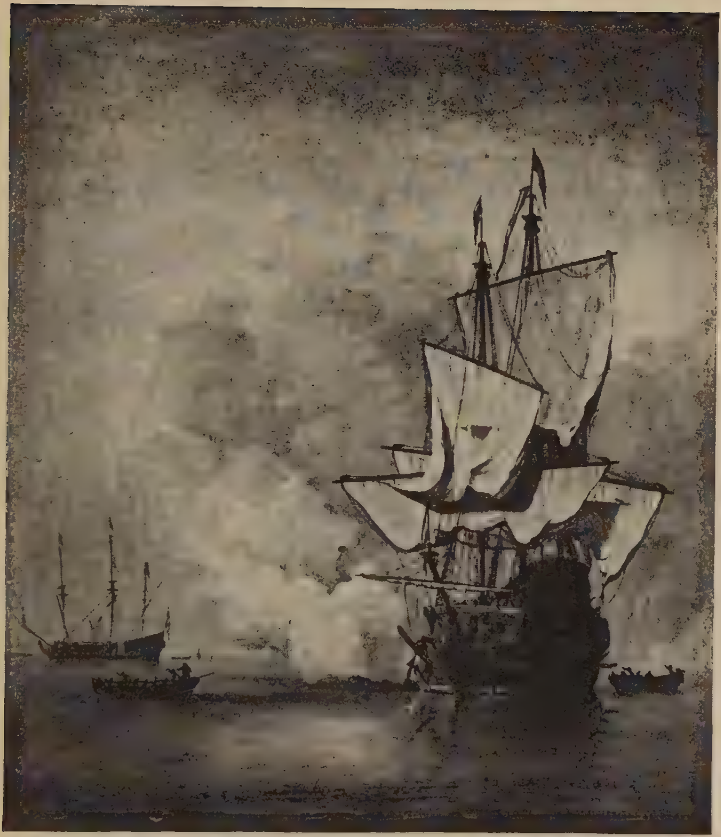
Ghetto weigh gold in the scales, where the poor heap up by families, dressed in reddened tatters or in cast-off Indian tinsel which they had picked up, where, in the darkness, the second-hand dealers heap up iron cuirasses, damascened arms, and wrought copper and leather, how should he fail to surprise the gestures which people make so unguardedly when settled in their misery—the mothers with fully exposed breasts suckling their little ones, the old people dying on straw mattresses, the sores wrapped with dirty rags, and the innocence recovered through hunger and love?

From the external and joyous vision of this picturesque universe revealed to him by his idling, by his purchases in the shops, by the piling up in his studio of heterogeneous collections—Venetian pictures, weapons, furs, jewels, and stuffed animals—he goes onward to his almost jealous contemplation of the human face and gesture in the light which he composed in order to illuminate them with all the harmonies of the most distant suns and the most poignant darkness; and he has not told us what roads he had to travel on this journey. It is the secret of his suffering. It is for us to accept and to understand when we look within us, if we also have suffered. We know that he was married, and happy to be so; that he loved his wife Saskia with all his senses, perhaps with all his heart; that he covered her with jewels and that he painted her nude, dressed, and wearing a great hat. We know that he was rich, or at least that he lived like a rich man with her, and that, when he became a widower, he was pursued by creditors and tracked from one lodging to another; poor at last, abandoned by his friends, given up to drinking, perhaps, he lived from day to day with his son and a servant, his mistress. And we know that the farther he plunged into his solitude the more populous his solitude became. We know that expression became more concentrated and more intense at the same time that the superficial harmonies, almost violent at first, wild with the joy of painting, with laughter, and the splendor of jewels and wine, grew reserved little by little, and finally sank their torrents of sparks, their reddish golds, their pale golds woven with blues, their green golds and their burnt-out greens shot through with gold, into the same dull and ruddy mass in which, since he no longer possessed jewel caskets, he had mixed the dust of his rubies, of his topazes, and his pearls, with the inexhaustible treasure of the sun and the shadow which he used royally and lavishly. We know that the imaginary architectures which Lastmann, his feeble master, was already trying to erect in fantastic lights, were being effaced from his dream at the same time that, to his startled soul, reality was revealing itself as more surprising and richer. We have seen the disappearance of his unreal mosques and synagogues, of which a few immense pillars and a few giant arches, covered with tracery and lacework, emerged from the shadow, thanks to a ray from above lighting up, on the pavement below, a group of Oriental kings; but



REMBRANDT. Study, drawing (*Louvre*).

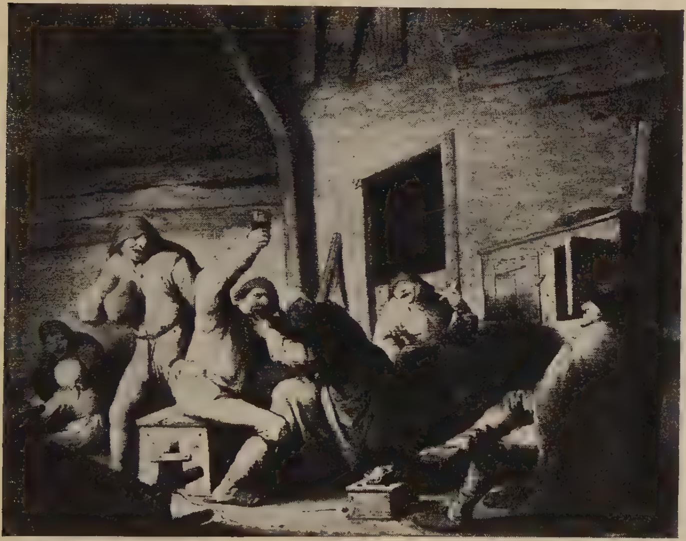
meanwhile the life around him was appearing little by little, and the structure of the world was affirming itself in more grandiose fashion when, in a dark attic, he divined the presence, barely visible, of some spectacle-maker in meditation. At its romantic beginnings, this dizzy imagination sought to embrace everything in the universe and in life and to transmit the whole by forcing its effects through hallucinating contrasts of light and darkness, of humanity, and of legend; and each thing had its distinct rôle—darkness, light, humanity, legend. He played like a magician with these scattered elements in order to astonish those about him and to dazzle himself. At the end, the universe and life had reconstituted themselves in a logical order; the shadows and the light, legend and humanity, were becoming part of himself, everything was coursing to the center of his being, and, when he looked at objects, he no longer invested them with his dreams and his rays of light: he wrested them from the objects themselves. At first, life was a marvelous tumult, and it was his problem to cause everything ever seen to enter into it, everything that ever was read, everything ever heard, everything guessed at. It became a rapid vision between two confused eternities, something fugitive, forever impossible to seize, an illusion. And it was in that phantom-like illusion that he suspected the truth. Young and rich, he made brilliant portraits of himself, in which the aigrette of a turban, the plume of a velvet cap, the gloves, the gold chains, the spirituelle mouth, and the curled mustache showed his satisfaction with himself. At that time he felt only a few things and thought he knew everything. Old and poor, he had a cloth wrapped round his head, his neck and hands were bare, and a worn coat was on his shoulders; but doubt, grief, awe before the mystery of life, and the disenchanted certitude of the vanity of



Van de Velde. The Sea Fight (*Amsterdam*).

action, all floated before the restless eyes, the sad mouth, and the furrowed brow. And now that he was feeling everything, he thought he knew nothing.

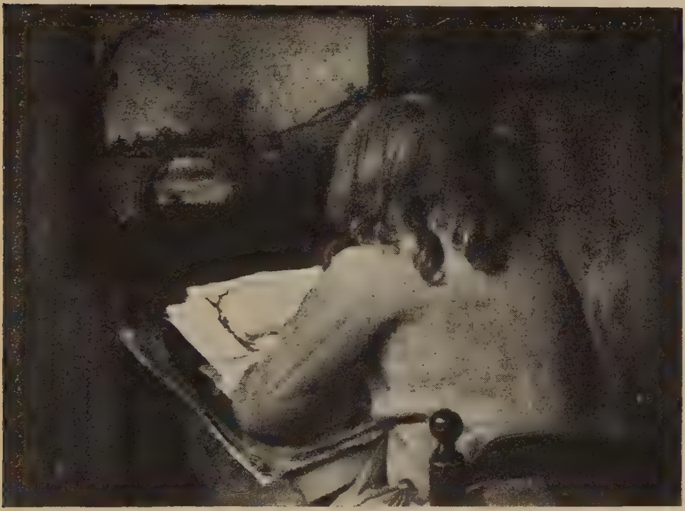
And yet, from insouciance to disquietude, from the impassioned and truculent painting of his first efforts to the hesitant but essential form of his last, it is the same central force which governs this mind. One follows it within him from form to form, with the shadow and the ray of light which circle around, illuminating one thing, hiding another, causing a shoulder to jut forth, or a face, or a raised finger, an open book, a forehead, or a little child in a manger. It is the same central force which tries to choose, to look upon the world as an inexhaustible repertory of moving symbols which the will seizes upon, but learns to utilize at its fancy only when it has penetrated the intimate powers manifested by space and by the volumes peopling it. In the silent man who wanders through the dirty streets and paints but few portraits other than those of his son, his servant, of some poor man he has met, or of himself, there lives always the imaginary voyager from the Orient and from Venice, who has followed, with the returning ships, the eternal movement proceeding from the heart of the cities to the uttermost parts of the sea; and in his mind the distant mirages of the infinity of the heavens still extend to the infinity of the waters. In the soberest portraits of his sixtieth year, where the gold and the red tremble in the limpid depths of the blacks and whites, the old alchemist finds himself once more, he who had caused fairies to appear in the mist of the west, who penetrated with flame the foggy winter of the cold countries, and mingled with the filth of misery the gems of mythical treasure, the purpled fruits which drop of themselves from the branches, the pollen of poisonous flowers, and the feathers dropped from the wings of birds of fire. If he consents to live between a damp stairway descending from the street and an air hole from which the daylight falls, it is because the sounds of the pavement cause the hundred thousand sonorous orchestras of enthusiasm and memory to leap within him, it is because the light of day fills his inner sight with the illuminations of setting suns and with fêtes which traverse and transfigure his desire. For him everything is now bathed in that radiance of which the luminous mist, the quivering reflections on the canals with their oily mottling, the glittering downpour, the frost of the fields, the immense vibration of tropical suns and the phosphorescent nights on the oceans of the south have created the very atmosphere of his thought and his sensation. Now all life starts from this inner radiance whose splendor, in turn, is what



Van Ostade. Gathering of peasants (*Munich*).

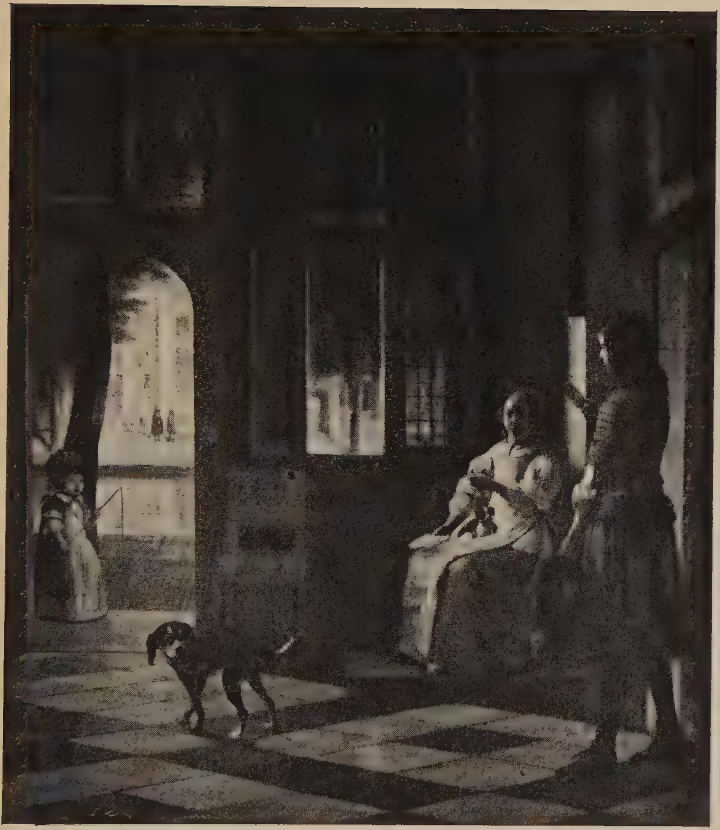
slowly reveals life, from the point of greatest brilliance to the regions of greatest darkness. That which plunges into the light is the reverberation of that which the night submerges. That which the night submerges prolongs into the visible that which plunges into the light. Thought, vision, words, and action unite this forehead, that eye, this mouth, that hand, with the volumes scarcely perceived in the shadow: heads and bodies bending over a birth, a death struggle or death itself. And this is so even, and perhaps above all, when the only instruments of his work are his steel point, his copper plate, and his acid—nothing but black and white; even then he handles the world like a continuing drama which light and darkness model, hollow out, convulse, calm, and bring to birth and death at the call of his passion, of his sadness, and the desperate desire for eternity and the absolute which overwhelms his heart. A lantern, a face lit up, darkness becoming animated, some beings leaning over a cradle on which all the light falls, a cross from which a corpse hangs, a miry road running alongside a pool, a cluster of trees, an obscure sky, a ray of light over some meadow land, the empire of the wind discovered in a flying cloud: here are nothing but black strokes crossing one another on a glowing page, and the tragedy of space and the tragedy of life make the sheet writhe in their fire.

When he was following the teaching of Rubens and of the Italians, as in that "Anatomy Lesson" at The Hague, which is only a good school picture—cold and of an even, waxy material—he arrived at laborious groupings from which almost everything that is his own disappeared, the anxious and direct sense of life, the atomic vibration which runs through his whole field of vision, the lightning illuminating that which he desires to be seen and the darkness veiling the things that he desires to keep silent. When he had followed out the moral bonds which unite the forms among themselves, when he had well observed how a woman holds a child to which she gives the breast, how she dresses it, how a little one takes its first steps, how two heads bend one toward the other for a confidence or a confession, and all the essential gestures which no one notices, he recreated from within outward—and without seeming to notice it—the great harmonies of form. The real mystery of life is that a gesture is beautiful as soon as it is true, and that to a deep functional truth a deep continuity of movements and volumes always responds. One must follow Rembrandt from his humblest notes, made every day with a flying hand, to his most carefully thought-out works. A hundred times he had seen people bending over the same task, auditors around a teacher, spectators and



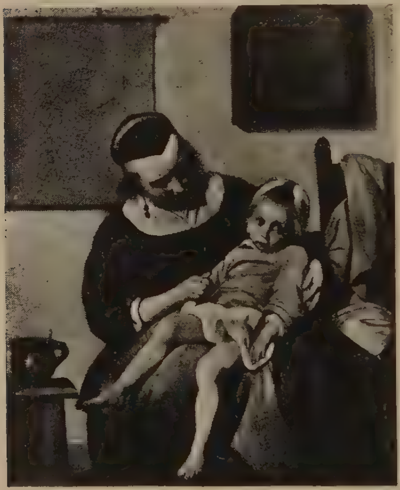
Pieter de Hooch (?). The reader (*Richmond*).

assistants around a surgeon, women around a mother giving birth. He had seen that if each one is at his task, the masses organize by themselves, following an irreproachable equilibrium, that the light falls where it should and ignores that which it should, because it is advantageous that it illuminate one point in the scene and that shadow reign elsewhere. And, in the very intensity of application to works of humanity which group men and women around daily events, he found the power of his expressive volumes. If the man who thinks is not always united with the man who feels, the man who feels, if he will only plumb his own depths, invariably finds there the harmonies which attach the humblest sensations and sentiments to the loftiest thoughts. Giotto, when he grouped people around the death of heroes, had felt those secret harmonies which Michael Angelo hardly ever suspected. But his language is still meager, the masses are only indicated, they do not always respond fully and organically to the profound impulsion of the sentiments which animate them. With Rembrandt, on the contrary, the very substance of the souls with the gesture passes uninterruptedly into the material. Whatever his tool, whether he made use of etching or oil painting, whether he had at his command all the colors of the prism or only the shadow and the light which are at the disposal of the engraver, the luminous palpitation and the instinctive movements which are inappreciable for others reduced the universe, for him, to an uninterrupted circulation of animate molecules of which he himself forms part. To the limit of the invisible he pursues the living presence of all the points which his eye can reach. With his colors he incorporates not only the fat and the blood which he catches from the butcher's stall where the split beeves display their purplish muscles, but also a little of the fog, a little



Pieter de Hooch. In the House (*Amsterdam*).

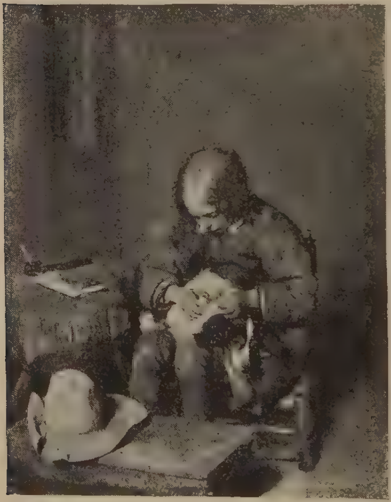
of the night, a great deal of silver, a great deal of flame, and a great deal of gold and of the sun. There is something of all this in each one of the materials of his pictures, whether it is the flesh of men or their glance, the crushed stubble at the edge of a road or a few tufts of reeds in a plain, the shrouds wherein the dead are laid, or the silks and furs in which the living are dressed, or the space all trembling with eternal vibrations whose source and goal he finds in each fragment of things. It was in the same period, in the same city and the same quarter, in the heart of the same swarming and miserable life, surrounded by the same shadows and the same lights that Baruch Spinoza was meditating his book.



Metsu. The Sick Child
(*Steengracht Museum, The Hague*).

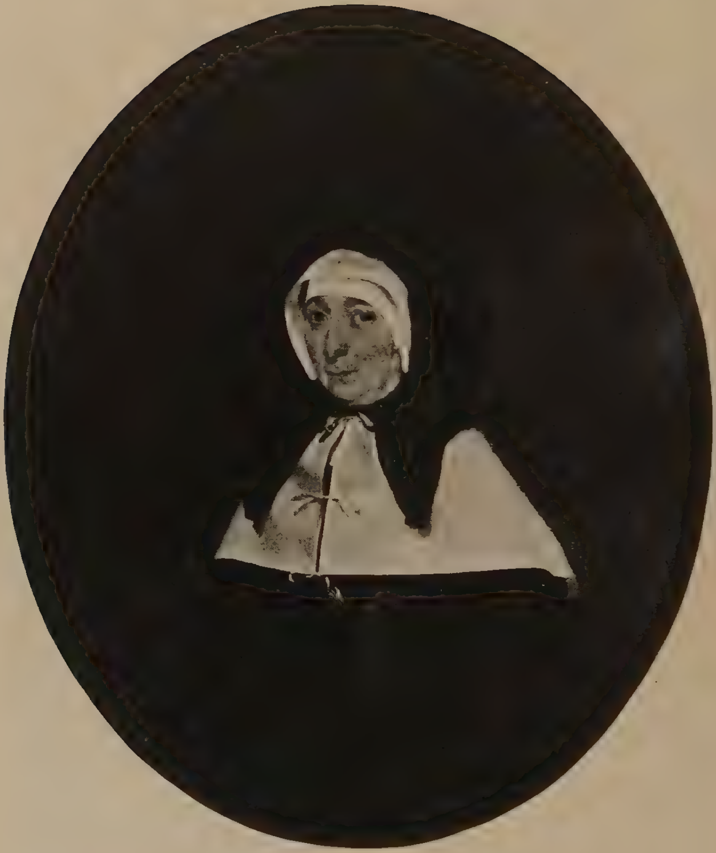
Because Rembrandt is the only one who was always present in everything that he looked at, he is the only one who dared to mix mud with the light of the eyes, to introduce fire into ashes, to cause a pink or a pale blue, as fresh as a flower, to glow in a shroud. When he comes, all moral categories disappear, to let the triumphal torrent of life, ever reborn, pour through the night, spurt forth from sepulchers, and cover putrescence and death with phosphorescent shadows in which new germs unfold. He has no need to put a nimbus around the head of Christ seated at the table of a peasant or entering a cellar where the sick and infirm languish, for the most discouraged hearts to hear the lyric song of hope born again from themselves. He has no need of a thinker to cause thought to float over a face. An old pauper, with his furrowed visage, the tendons of his neck, and his rags suffices to evoke something poignant and gentle which he never defines; and his servant, baring herself in a miserable room, has enough sap under her skin to make the place flame as with a torch of voluptuousness. The force of life which dwells in him rolls into withered flesh and covers rags with purple. If Christ had not existed, Rembrandt would have found other legends through which to recount, from the cradle to the grave, the human drama that he was living, or else he would have done without legends and would not have placed under his pictures the titles which they do not need. In the birth of anybody, in the repast of anybody, in the death of anybody, he finds himself. His humanity is actually formidable; it has the inevitable accent of the plaint, the love, the continual, indifferent, and dramatic interchange between everything that is born and everything that dies. He follows our course toward death by the traces of blood which mark it. He does not weep over us, he does not comfort us because he is with us, because he is ourselves. He is there when the cradle is illumined. He is there when the young girl appears to us leaning on the window sill, with eyes that do not know and a pearl between her breasts. He is there when we have disrobed her, when her hard torso trembles to the throbbing of our fever. He is there when the woman opens her knees to us with the same maternal emotion with which she opens her arms to her child. He is there when the fruit drops from her ten or fifteen times in her life. He is there afterward, when she is mature, when her belly is deeply grooved, her bosom droops, and her legs grow heavy. He is there when she has aged, when her furrowed face is surrounded with a cap and when her bony hands cross at her waist to signify that she has no resentment against life for having dealt hard with her. He is there when we are old, when we look fixedly toward the approaching night; he is there when we are dead and our corpse offers its winding-sheet to the arms of our sons.

When, toward the evening of life, he painted the "Syndics of the Drapers' Guild," he had attained the power to fix average humanity in the eternity of life. Such a force, mastering the soul of the world, giving to the every-day event the importance and the majesty of the mind, recreating the face of men in the simplicity of their habitual existence elevated to epic height by the invisible effort of the intelligence and of love, has in it something terrifying. With Rembrandt we no longer know the true value of words, doubtless because they have only that one value which we can place upon them. Is an art like his objective in which the inner drama so silently animates face and gesture, where



TERBORG. Boy hunting Fleas (*Munich*).

the heart of an all-powerful man never ceases to beat within the forms that appear, where the night which he dissipates or thickens at will is always illuminated by his secret presence? And when that man reaches the power of manifesting his grief, his pity, or his pride without telling them, through his recital of the most ordinary and the most hidden acts of life, or in painting a mere portrait, can one discover in his language philosophic intentions which he would doubtless have been surprised to have attributed to him when he was caressing with tawny shadows the belly and the breasts of his servant? There is in this a terrible mystery of which Shakespeare, before Rembrandt, had caught a glimpse. Whereas every living spirit, worthy of domination and strength, struggles unceasingly to individualize himself, to separate himself from the world, the supreme individual no longer separates himself from the world; he accepts it wholly. The world merges with his being to such a degree, all external movements re-echo in his flesh so suddenly and so intoxicatingly that he no longer distinguishes that which is himself from that which is the world, nor realizes that all the things of the world are hymns which are within him. It is because there was, between the world and himself, a pitiless interchange, a kind of silent frenzy of desire, reborn immediately after the possession. When he had not succeeded in dragging to his room some outcast in order to lure to his mouth and his eyes all of his old tired soul, when he did not find his old brother there, battered and hollowed out by work, or his son Titus with his eyes of shadowy flame, or Hendrickje always ready to leave the stove and her dishcloth to put an amber necklace around her neck, undress, and give her flanks to the embrace of light and of the mind, he must needs, to appease his fever, stand before a mirror, grimace, laugh, look grave, feign fright,

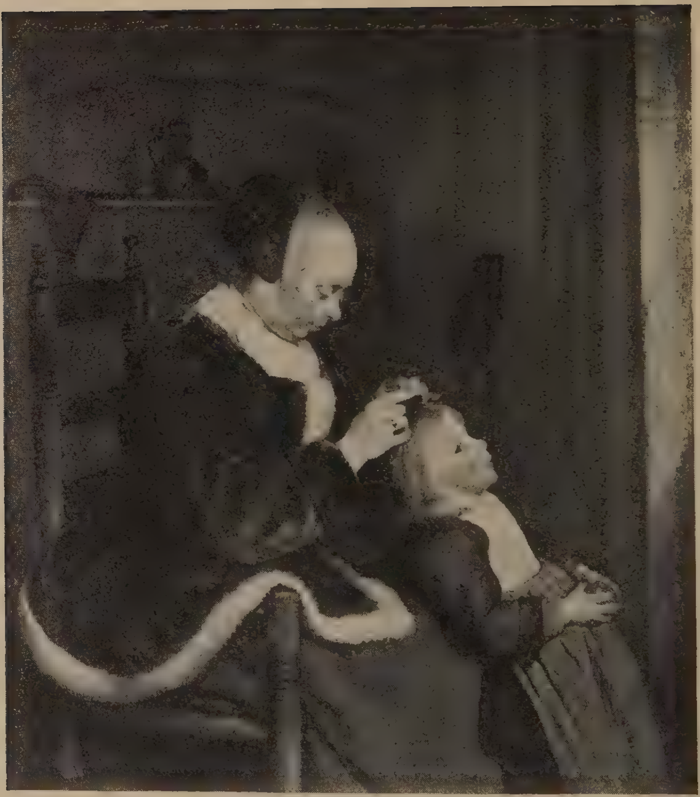


TERBORG. Portrait (*Berlin*).

or give utterance to his suffering. Life for him was a continuous surprise and discovery. It did not allow him an hour of respite. All his misfortunes, his misery, and the oblivion into which he slipped were nothing as compared with the increasing torture of being unable to grasp the flight of things and to perceive the time which was left him to live and to learn, becoming briefer and slipping away more quickly, in the measure that the universe widened its limits and flowed back into him, ever more moving and more complex and more secret. The approach of death is not really dramatic save for him who feels that he will never possess life.

V

In an attempt to circumscribe this nature, so human, which is to say, so ready at all times to recognize itself in all men and to recognize all men in itself, people have gone to the point of trying to make it the expression of the Reformation. They have not realized how far its intoxication in welcoming all things, its sensual generosity, its powerful pity, and that superior unmorality in which Spinoza would have recognized his respect for the rôle which evil and corruption play in the universal organism, were separated from the spirit of the Protestant beliefs. In Holland, as elsewhere, the Reformation was, in its origin, the assertion of the national temperament and a political movement taking the pretext for outburst which the Reformers offered. The Dutch peasant demanded above all that he be allowed to dry up his polder, milk his cows, make his cheese, grind his wheat, and sell his cattle. And Dutch painting expressed, above all, the forces freed by the economic and national insurrection. Considered abstractly and separated from the vital movement of which it is only one aspect, a religion has never created

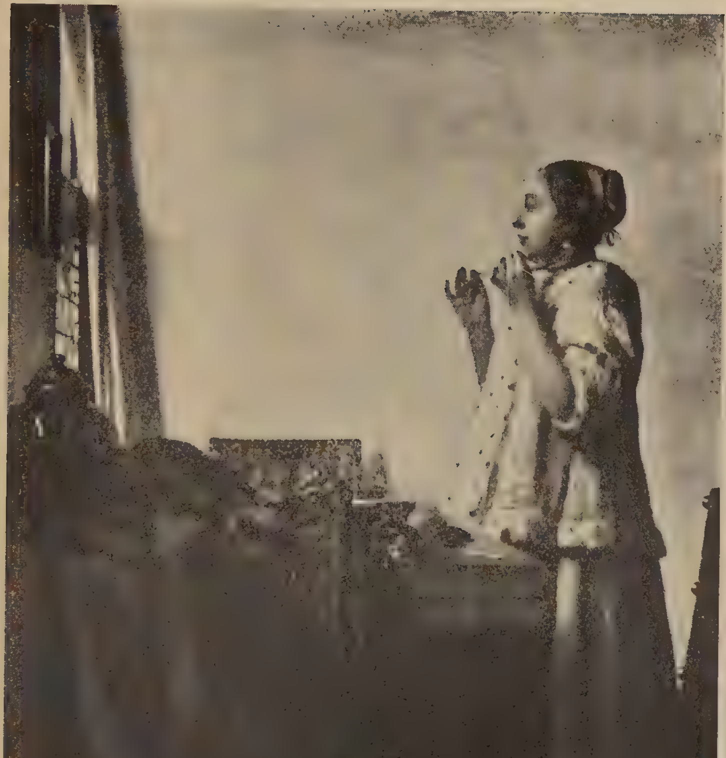


TERBORG. Woman combing her child (*Steengracht Museum, The Hague*).

artists and its power of fecundation, precisely, dies when it triumphs. Dutch painting disappeared with the energy of the emancipation, while Protestantism remained alive. If it had a rôle in the genesis of painting in Holland, it was to demonstrate that the religious spirit, of which art is the supreme expression, is everywhere superior to its sectarian forms. In its iconoclasm, Protestantism prevented Dutch art from illustrating the Scriptures for the ornamentation of the temples and the edification of the believers. Dutch art had its revenge in turning toward space and life and in edifying the artists, who are the eternal believers.

If there is, in Dutch painting, a man impregnated with Protestantism, it is Ruysdael. It is also Albert Cuyp, no doubt. But Albert Cuyp, after all, is perhaps just a good Hollander who tried to say about Holland everything that could be said, and thereby forced his language a little. In his work he gathered together the diffused blondness of the landscapes of van Goyen, the sumptuous materiality of the early Rembrandt, and the fineness of color of Terborg; he accompanied Paul Potter to the paddocks, he followed van Ostade and Hondecoeter into the barnyards and the stables, and he went with van der Velde to look at the sea, without gaining from them their mysterious power, or their simplicity, or their intimacy, or their familiar good-nature, or their cordial optimism. A shade of solemnity hovers about when the lords go hunting or supervise their fisheries, when the herds climb a hill crowned with walls in ruin, or when evening falls slowly over his imposing landscapes where animals are lying down. One would say that he prepares for Louis XIV a Holland made aristocratic and ready to turn that king out politely. He is the painter of the rich, and he knows how to act his part. He is even proud of it. Which is what the Reformation leads to when one accepts without regret its social consequences of economic individualism and family egoism, as it leads to Ruysdael when one studies the question of his principles and closely observes the workings of his inner being in order to judge his acts with severity.

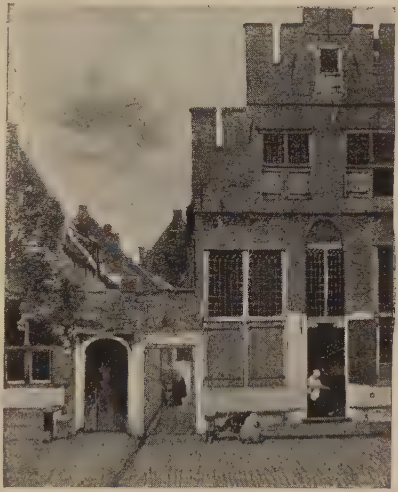
For Ruysdael, the man, flees the rich, and fine materials, and the whirl of life, and luxurious repasts. He is always grave, he is often sad, he is sometimes tiresome, and he is the only one who tries to convince, to abstract, and to demonstrate. And what is more, he has character. But one must not forget that he appears at the moment when Holland begins to feel the fatigue of painting. His artist's sensibility warns him that there is a certain diminution, or at all events, disunion, in the energy of the nation. Where did he get those tortured rocks, those furious cascades, and that harsh, lusterless color which one might say was dried by the wind? When he approaches the sea, it is only to look upon the tempest, the waves assaulting the piers, and the sky and water mingling in the spray of the downpour and the breakers. When he crosses the polder, the daylight is livid among the stripped branches and the trunks twisting above their roots halfway out of the soil. He quivers with the earth when a black cloud passes over the sun. Trees uprooted and shattered by the torrents, herds returning with the storm over trembling wooden bridges, and poor huddled houses; he sees in nature only that which responds to the dramas of consciousness which must have shaken him. The vast world is gray, there are flights of black birds against the big clouds which fill the whole sky. His universe, given over to the tragic elements and wherein man and life are only poor ephemeral things drenched by the rain and beaten by the winds, permits us to divine the secret illness which he does not confess, and beside it the romantic battle pictures of Wouwerman,



Vermeer of Delft. Young woman putting on a necklace (*Berlin*).

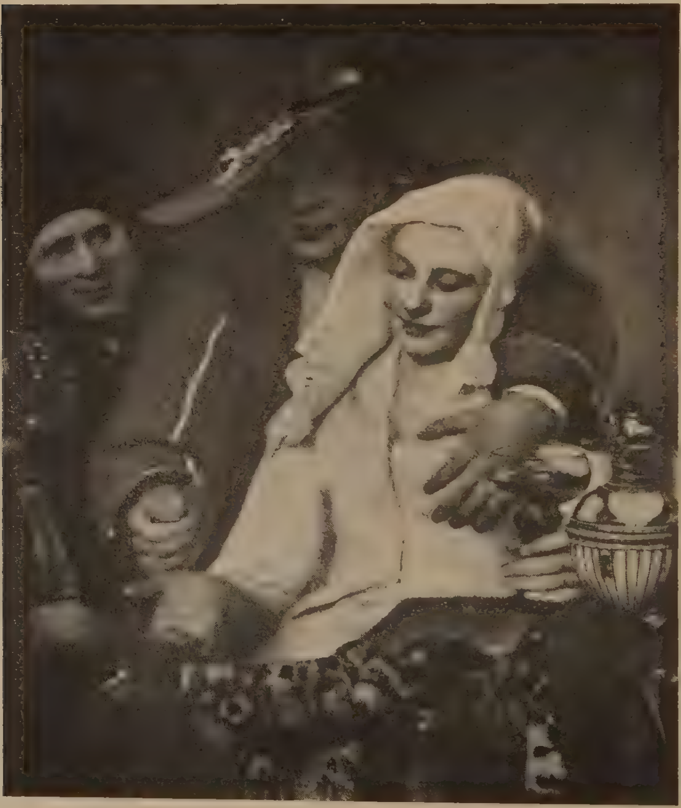
bathed in clouds of smoke and showing men hanged and walls in ruin, disguise, for the joy of those who delight in fine military painting, the real physiognomy which is being assumed, in the eyes of a powerful man, by the sinister aspects of the road.

As the joy of painting seems to grow with the contemporaries of Ruysdael the nearer they approach the hour when painting is suddenly arrested, the work of this great poet of space forces us, each time that it presents itself, to inquire into his life. And of that we know nothing save that he had but little success and died in the poorhouse. To be sure, he saw the dikes cut, the polder inundated, and the new generation obliged to regain everything from the foreigner and the sea during the prime of his life. But the old springs still have their temper, the peasant and the fisherman have kept their weapons furbished, and among those painters of his time who stay indoors to seize there the harmonies of home life or who fix the image of water and clouds on a square of canvas the size of their two hands, not one experiences that sentiment of melancholy impotence which makes an intellectual drama of each one of his pictures. If Terborg is a little older than Ruysdael, he dies in the same year and, like him, is present at the drama of the great wars. Brekelenkam, Jan Steen, Metsu, Pieter de Hooch, and Vermeer of Delft are about of his age. But Jan Steen, the carefree spirit, never ceases his laughter, and, say what you will, it is without bitterness. The others do not leave their households, which the well-varnished furniture fills with blond light, save to go to look at the round arms of the servant girl who is washing the doorstep from a full pail, or else at the neighbor opposite who is making lace behind the painted inclosure and the little windowpanes set in blue frames. The people have become rich, and well-being has come to the clean little houses where the luxuries of the home are being developed in egoistic fashion. Jan Steen is the only one who has discovered that he has had enough of housekeeping, of letters of love or of business, of living in the intimacy of the family, and of smoking a lonely pipe; he has seen all he wants of plying the distaff at the fireside and rocking the crying baby. He brings home people who drink, sing, break the dishes, and relieve themselves in the corners of the room. And that is not enough, if we are to believe the legend. He turns innkeeper. He helps his strong lads whom the drunkards follow to the cellar staircase, and the young fellows who are in a hurry to get upstairs to the floor above, in setting up the rickety tables where artless gluttony will soon put his customers at their ease. He roars and gets drunk with them, he plays dice and cards with them, he is their friend; before his door he sets up stands for the minstrels who play their bagpipes, beat their drums, and scrape on their fiddles. He does not fail to come in haste when the tooth puller with drawn face and enormous pincers searches the mouth of a poor devil who howls and stamps his feet, to the great delight of the gossips and the children.



Vermeer of Delft. The Alley (*Six Collection, Amsterdam*).

This moralist is probably a man of the most vicious life. But he never loses his head, and he sees what the others do not. He is present, as if by chance, at the comedies of married life, and he knows far better than the constable how to pounce on a couple of wenches who are picking the pockets of their customer when he is dead drunk. And the cut-purse and the thimble-



Vermeer of Delft. The drinkers, detail (*Dresden*).

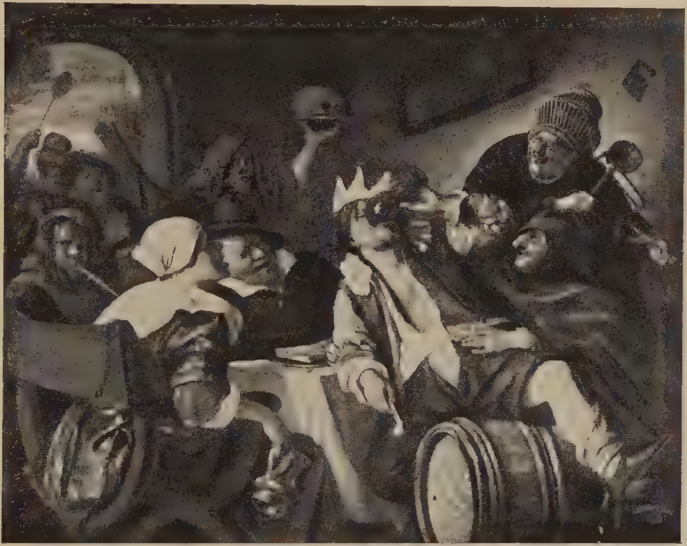
rigger interest him infinitely. Never does he become angry, never does he preach; his indulgence is illimitable. It is because he needs it himself, as he well knows. He is their accomplice. His clearness of eye, which delights him, shows his frankness. If he had not lived their life, if he had observed their innocent sports from the outside only, he would note with greater attention and more discreet pleasure the rare play of the tones under the caress of atmosphere; he would be more of a painter than he is, but doubtless less living, as well. All classes and all environments have their own painters in this period, or rather, in all classes, in all types of environment painters are born who never cease to belong thereto, who have no wish to escape from them, and who die after performing their function, like the banker at his counter, the shoemaker in his shop, the butcher in his stall, the miller in his mill, and the fisherman in his boat. And so Holland herself, her villages, and the people of her fairs, the pavements of her cities, their hovels, their shops, their almshouses, the homes of their citizens, their storehouses, the traffic of the canals and the roadsteads, the doubtful resorts of her harbor towns, her solid virtues, her gross vices, and her violent and heavy life of joyous effort in commerce and war, the whole country comes down to us, overflowing with action and enjoyment, economical and prodigal, without a single one of its gestures or one of its minutes being forgotten, dissimulated, or misunderstood. Were it not for Ruysdael, and above all Rembrandt, this would be the least mysterious mirror, but also the most faithful, which man has ever held up before the face of his days.

VI

Only, after Rembrandt, and even with Ruysdael, the painting of Holland lost the conquering force of the generation which issued from the founders. Jan Steen has no longer the truculence of Frans Hals and his pupils, Brouwer, van Ostade, and the first vagabond painters who rolled their candid life through the evil places and the inns where they paid their shot by painting a sign or the portrait of some bully. The painting of Holland knows now that van Tromp and de Ruyter command the winds and the wave; it is happy, it isolates itself, and perhaps it is just that absolute and passive beatitude which tortures Ruysdael. One can foresee that the coldness and the petty, anecdotal spirit of Metsu and the glassy dryness of van Mieris will succeed, all too quickly, the absence of disquietude and the splendid materialism of Vermeer and of Pieter de Hooch.

When these bourgeois painters had discovered silvery grays, and blacks upon dull reds emerging from the penumbra, when they had surprised, in a room filled with blond ash color, the acts of the family seated around a beautiful tablecover, with an inkwell or an open book on the table, or with a workbox or a musical instrument, they could do no more than sit down before silver compote dishes, decorated plates, and crystal glasses. The gold of a lemon, the skin of a roast fowl, the topaz or the ruby of a wine maintained there under their eyes the familiar harmonies which the waxed floors, the satin dresses, the velvet curtains, the earthenware pots, and the copper vases realized in the house. Terborg lent to the bourgeois families, who live in these interiors so charged with their artless egoism, such rare and sober elegance that it seems to emanate from his almost muted symphonies.

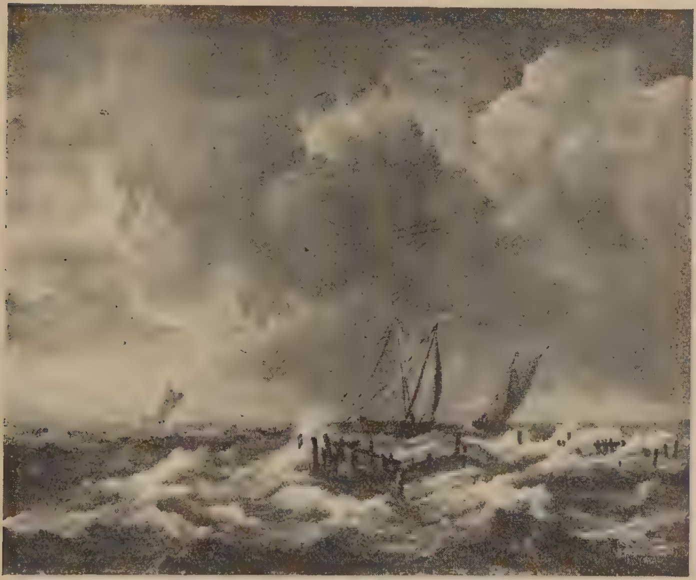
One cannot conceive portraits more aristocratic than those signed by this painter of the most materialistic and positive among the peoples of the earth. He is a Titian of the north, less decorative, certainly, and less broad, and less lyric, but on the other hand carrying the contrary virtues to the highest point of distinction. A small personage is alone, standing in the center of a little picture. Dressed in black, almost always, with rare grays insinuating themselves throughout the whole, living like flesh and blood, precious as a fine pearl, it seems that through the taut structure and the density of the harmonies which he concentrates in that tiny space, he summarizes in his discretion the unexpected image of intellectual Holland. By himself alone he represents the silent and proud reserve of the spirit in exile amid the surrounding coarseness. All Terborg's models, his cavalrymen, and even his prostitutes bear that imprint. And yet, by a singular paradox, all of them, even the lowest and most vulgar, are themselves



JAN STEEN. Epiphany (*Brussels*).

and at home. The expression is concentrated and fills the forms to their depths; it is distributed with equal attention over busy hands, foreheads bent under shaggy mops of hair, the happy and peaceful faces of the mothers, and the astonished or mischievous faces of the children. The light does not obtrude itself, it is never indiscreet; but it follows lovingly the line of the comb in the red hair, it touches the amused grimace, it shines in the eye of the dog who is being relieved of fleas, it lights up a jewel against a moist skin, and it carries on the mood of gentle excitement which envelops everything and is awakened and maintained by every incident of the homely and continuous drama of the inhabited room, the window which lights it and the commonplace actions which take place there each day. A transparent atmosphere caresses the gilded napes of necks bending under the carefully arranged hair. In the air dazzled with pale gold, the discreet glow of a silvery skirt, of a cherry-colored bodice, of steel-gray breeches, of a boot of tawny leather, or a pearl hung from a blue ribbon and glistening on a blond cheek mingles with the sonority of the harpsichord itself to surround and penetrate with their soft tones the velvety peacefulness of lives unrolling in security and comfort.

Pieter de Hooch prefers to look out through the window whence one perceives the canal, and on the other side of it, the little triangular houses of red brick with their painted shutters. But into the street he carries on the intimacy of the dwellings where buxom young mothers with bare arms wash and comb little girls with long dresses and round pink faces and bushy red hair. He carefully follows the soapy water which streams from the pavement of the dining room, to filter in between the stones of the quay. When he is seated before his door and chats with his neighbors, he has to give a glance through to the back of the open rooms and look on at the household work. At home, he cannot bear to have a single door closed; he watches the laundry and the shining kitchen. Not satisfied with being present at the doctor's visit or watching the child being dressed or listening to the thin song of the spinet, he must follow the light as it roams through the corridors, following from room to room the black and white tiles of the floor, lighting up the coppers, and awakening—with the carpets, the upholstery of the furniture, the half-drawn curtains of the alcove, skirts and doublets—the discreet life of the reds, the grays, the oranges, and the blacks, which it bathes and turns blond, gently and evenly. With him, with Terborg, and with Vermeer, everything lives and

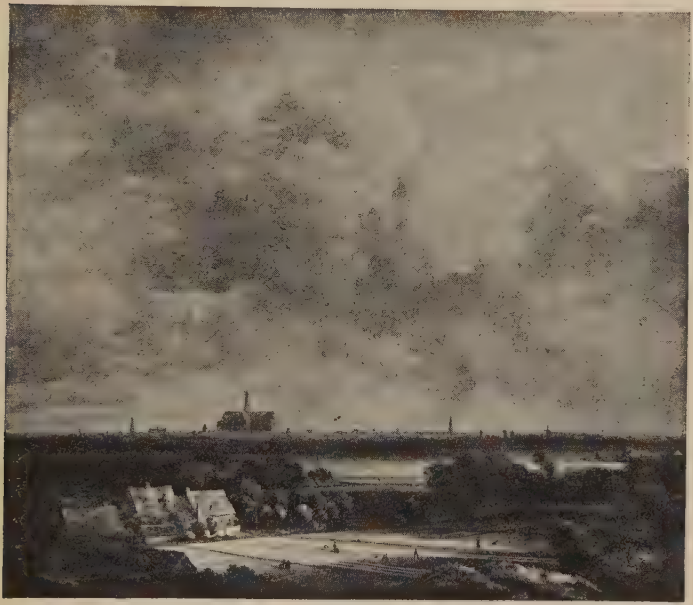


Ruysdael. Haarlem Lake (*Brussels*).

speaks; we see that the teapot is warm, that the chair has just been used and the tapestry work has just been left, that the andirons are awaiting the feet which will rest upon them, and that all these things which are kept so clean are yet a little bit worn, and that the wandering shadow takes on the warmth of the hand.

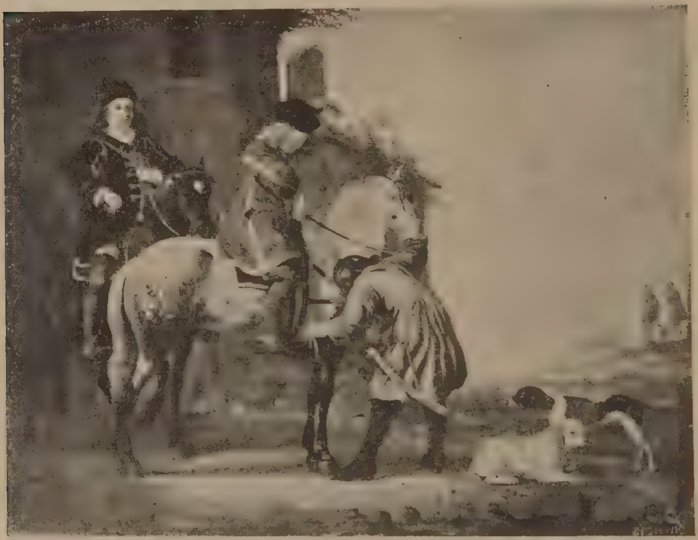
Vermeer reaches the point of painting the radiant silence which emanates from these friendly things, and the very welcome which they extend to you. That woman and that mirror are used to each other; it was also that woman who moved that ball of thread; and if that curtain retains that fold, it is because each time she raises it she touches it in the same place. Those rare pictures hanging on the wall have, with their muffled harmonies, awakened in the pearly amber of the room a few almost imperceptible echoes of the world of misty gold which begins across the threshold; slowly and peacefully they have formed her vision. Everything is heavy with memories of her, of her perfume, of her warmth, of her habits, of her breath. If anyone but she were there, the light entering by that window near which she places herself to read or work would not soften as it passes through the glass, it would not caress so lovingly the hand and the inclining forehead, it would not mingle with the golden strands of the hair. The light itself is a friend of the household. In the glass or the case of a clavichord it sketches the shadow of a familiar profile, it tints the bare wall as it would tint a pure water, and across objects which emerge or grow dim, it carries the mystery of the growth or decline of day.

No one has penetrated farther into the intimacy of matter. As he crystallizes it in his painting, as he permits it to retain its grain, its thickness, its dull inner life, Vermeer has multiplied its qualities through all the limpid brilliance and the warm transparence which it takes on through the sight of the painter whose eyes were probably the clearest that ever have been. There is so deep an agreement between the material and the harmonies which accompany it that they seem to come from within, to be born spontaneously from the mass of objects, like a fruit coloring in proportion as



Ruysdael. View of Haarlem (*The Hague*).

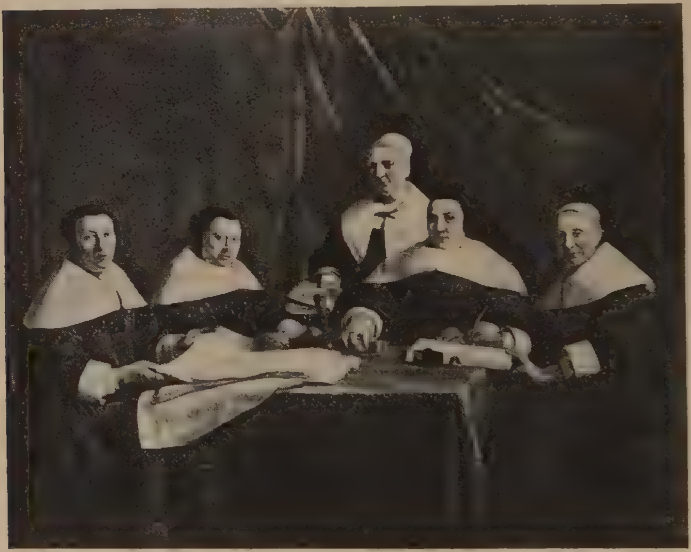
its juice mellows. The color is kneaded into the tissue of things, into that rounded face flushed with its young blood, into that hand resting on that golden bodice; those reds and those blacks are as unfathomable as translucent stones. He did not paint a silk dress, lace, eyes, lips, cheeks, the velvet of a mantle, or the plume of a felt hat without his bearing in mind the cattle in the fields against whose emerald they look like black diamonds. After the rain, everything opaque in the atmosphere of Holland assumes a liquid and luminous depth which Vermeer incorporated with his color as if it were powdered pearls and turquoises, vibrating like the molecules of living organisms. He mingles the turquoise and the pearl with everything, with the soil, with dirty waters, and with old walls. The blues and reds of roofs and shutters, their disturbed reflections in the blue water, and the trees whose dark foliage is blue, form, in the only landscape which we have from him, a miraculous harmony. The milky blue of Delft ware, with which the very paving stones of the city seem to be colored, floats through the picture and is barely affected by the pearly grays and pinks which the light and the clouds temper in a vibration of silver.



ALBERT CUYP. Starting for the ride (*Louvre*).

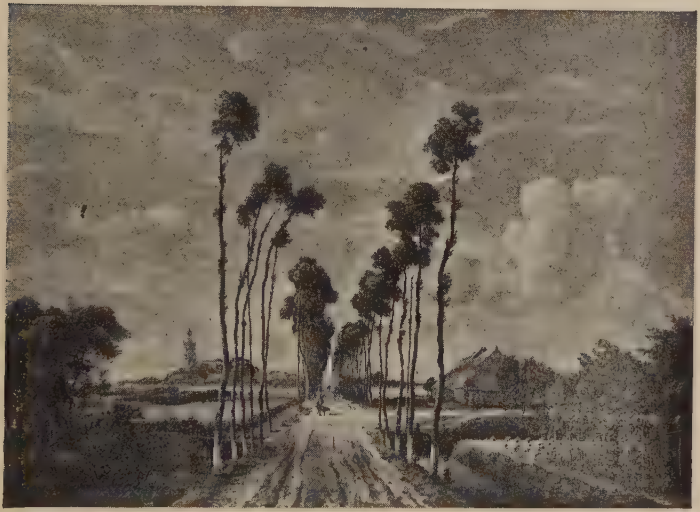
Vermeer of Delft summarizes Holland. He has the qualities common to the Dutch, and in him they are gathered into a single sheaf and at a single stroke raised to the highest power. This man, who is the greatest master of the beauty of pigment, is without the least imagination. His desires never go beyond that which his hand can touch. He has accepted life in its totality. He gives it out again. He has interposed nothing between himself and it, he limits himself to restoring to it the maximum of splendor, of intensity, and of concentration, which an ardent and attentive study discovers in it. He and Rembrandt are the opposite poles; for Rembrandt is the only one in his epoch to go against the stream of splendid middle-class materialism which surrounds him, in order to attain, through it and all bathed in its strength, the infinite lands of contemplation.

And yet the painter of Delft, like Terborg, like Pieter de Hooch, like Brekelenkam at times, like that Karel Fabritius so mysterious and so powerful, and who died too young to gain possession of his own nature, felt the genius of the master. Almost all the painters born in Holland contemporary with Rembrandt and after him recognized him as being the only one whose indifference to the approbations and the hatreds of the crowd rendered him capable of understanding it and worthy of dominating it. Only, carried along by his strength, and strong in his very strength, these men fought in their own station and during their own time, sure of acting in accordance with his dictates when they were no longer observing him. They had confidence in themselves. . . . The weak men, on the contrary, those who never took their eyes off him—Gerard Dou, Ferdinand Bol, Salomon de Koninck, Flinck, and Maes—were devoured by him. Ferdinand Bol carried his golden atmosphere, like an intruder, in among the abundant forms which Rubens, the other king of the north, imposed upon his weakness. Gerard Dou thought that in order to make a home scene, a hand, a shoulder, or a face stand out more strongly from the darkness, he had to wait for night, light a candle or a lamp, and reduce to an amusing or sentimental little story the human and dramatic enchantment to which life, in revealing itself, always transported the old man with the oil-stained handkerchief bound around his forehead as he drew from some dark hovel the splendor and the heat and the fecundity of the sun. The flame of that sun showed Nicolas Maes no more than the anecdote, enveloped in the silent intimacy of Terborg or of Vermeer. The "chiaroscuro" which the old masters of the Netherlands, especially



Jan de Bray. The lady regents of the Hospital (*Haarlem*).

Honthorst, were already trying to borrow from Caravaggio, and in which Rembrandt had seized the law of nature itself—chiaroscuro was emerging once more, with the last artists of Holland, from the actual interchanges of mind, matter, and space, to sink to the level of a school process, to immobilize the world and dissociate its elements. In this period of the death struggle of Dutch painting, following immediately upon the last two defensive wars, the men who abandon their studio and go forth from their houses are the only ones still to express something of their country. They will look again upon the sea from the dike which is being repaired, upon the grassy fields which are being dried up again, and the cities and towns which are building up their brick walls again and restoring their canals. Such are van der Heyden and Gerrit Berck-



HOBBEMA. The Avenue of Middelharnis (*National Gallery*).

Heyde, who paint the street, the market, the public square, and the intimacy of the narrow façades behind a curtain of trees. Such are the last painters of the van de Velde dynasty who, after having boarded the warships, after having breathed the smoke of powder and conflagration amid the thunder of the cannon, have seen the big ships of commerce taking the sea again with their pennants flying, and have seen the long waves and the banking of clouds in the breeze that plays through the great spaces of the heavens. Such is Hobbema, who passes his life in the polder, still drowned in places by swamps and encumbered with rotted trunks; he goes forth among the slender trees and along the broken roads, stopping each time that a clearing opens amid a little wood or that a farm sheltered from the west wind by a few thin elms appears beside a pond. He finds again the eternal and monotonous landscape, the muddy and grassy soil, the lightness of the blond mist. Holland consents to abandon painting, but upon condition that the last of her painters record that she has not changed, that she is pursuing her task, that her cattle are increasing, that her mills are still turning.

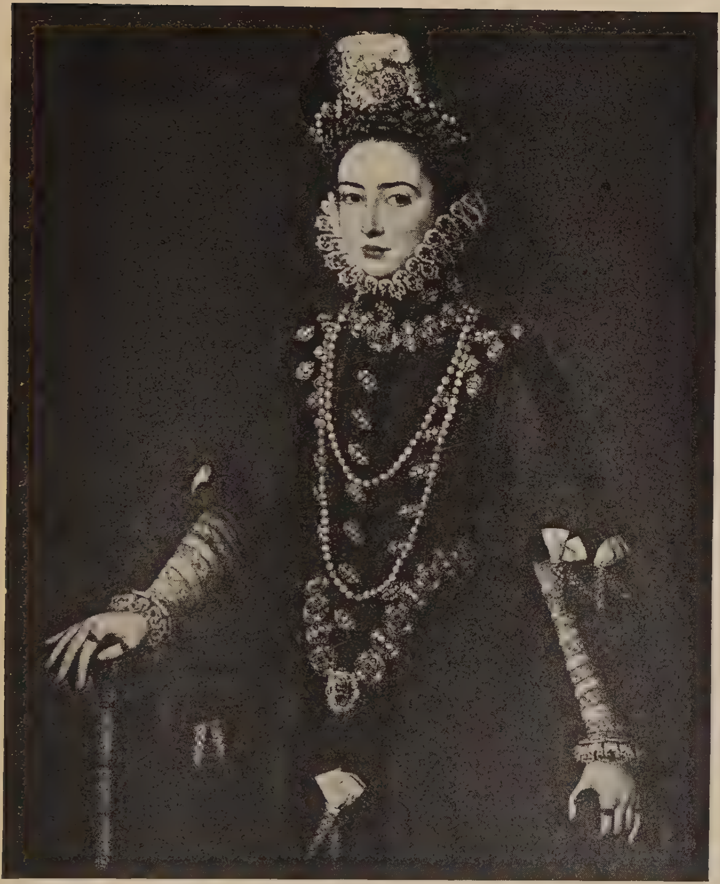
Toledo

Chapter III. SPAIN

I

DIVIDED into ten sections through religion, war, and nature—mountains, rocks, burnt plateaus where no grass grows—Spain remained for two thousand years without gaining command of her language. The Romans, the Arabs, and the French had, by turns, affirmed their domination through their imposing architectures, upon which the Spanish soul, still obscure and fragmentary, imprinted only furtive traces, until the hour when Catholic, political, and military unity interpreted its need for action. Then there was something like a tragic conflagration. The flames spurted forth from the shadow and pierced the walls in order to gain the summit of the towers; a frenzy of cruelty and melancholy passion appeared everywhere; the naves and choirs were encumbered with tortured altar-pieces and with stalls hollowed out with carvings; the alcazars and the mosques were seized and Christs of wood and altars of gold were set up in them. Everything pointed to a somber aspiration toward suffering, through which the voluptuous desire to enter upon life sought to punish itself even before life was mastered. But the painted idols which the artisans of the people had been carving to place at the crossroads ever since the first centuries of Christianity, the Calvaries, the niches, and the thin, bleeding gods hung by the nails in their hands, sinking on their spreading knees, could neither inspire in a people unused to great abstract constructions the power to build a fitting sanctuary, nor check the invasion of the less terrible images which the enriched cities and the triumphant monarchy summoned from abroad. The union of Castile and Aragon and the conquest of Granada did not bear fruit until later, and then only in a few solitary minds which wrested the soul of Spain from the foreigner only to render it a secret cult in their proud meditation. Spain has no collective expression defining for the future that jealous unity which it affirmed, sword in hand, upon the routes of the world.

Its sudden expansion through war subjected it for a hundred years to the peoples it had vanquished. The annexation of Flanders, the war with France, and the conquest of Italy deliver Castile to the Flemings and the French, and the eastern sea-coast to the Italians. The infiltration did not, moreover, wait political events before coming about. Jan van Eyck came to Castile soon after finishing the painting of the "Mystic Lamb" at Ghent, and, through Luiz Dalmau, the painter, conquered Catalonia. Later, the French sculptor Philippe Vigarni brings to Toledo and to Granada the knowledge of the men of the north, which his brother,

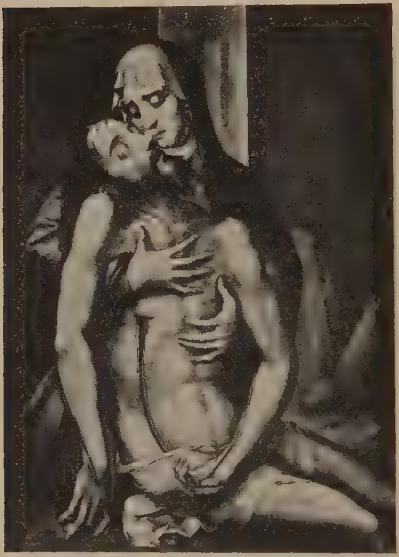


Sanchez Coello. The Infanta Caterina Micaela (*Prado*).

the painter Juan de Borgona, a hard, tense draftsman, tries to place at the service of Italian idealism. Bartolomeo Ordonez, a sculptor of Barcelona, goes to Carrara in search of marble from which to carve his overloaded tombs, hollowed out like a piece of goldsmith's work, and Gil de Siloe peoples the chapels of Burgos with them. Ordonez also brings back the theatrical redundance and the grandiloquent mannerisms which are beginning to decompose Italy. Damian Forment, confronted by her, restrains the rude strength of his native Aragon. The power necessary to isolate themselves belongs only to the free spirits of culminating epochs made aware, by invulnerable pride, of the dangers of these contacts. But when a race is developing, all its energies are concentrated upon conquest and expansion. The Primitives, suddenly transported to a world which is descending the other side of the slope, allowed themselves to be dazzled by the skill and the audacity of the decadent artists. They think that they can learn. They abandon what they know. They give over to the men of civilization the control of their senses.

For a people without character the defeat is a decisive one. A people bent on defining itself, on the contrary, suddenly perceives that it has as yet said nothing about itself and employs the instrument which it did not forge to explore its depths. When Alonso Berruguete, the son of a good painter-workman who had helped with his ingenuous collaboration in the works of Juan de Borgona, had learned in Italy the speech of Michael Angelo, the Renaissance could penetrate no farther into Spain. The ease of Berruguete in making a torso twist from the hips, in sending a face back into the shadow of a shoulder, in furrowing a muscular belly with darks and lights, and in pursuing the most terrible and most grave reality in a cadaver stretched upon the ground, bears witness to the fact that Spain is reacting at the very moment when she seems to be surrendering herself. She utilizes a style which she has learned, and which she will try to forget, only to deepen her faith in an ever-increasing cruelty. Berruguete had just died when Juan de Herrera constructed the Escorial. Spain has no architecture. But if there is a monument which interprets the efforts she had to make in order to resist the invasion of the complicated and declamatory styles born of the meeting of the Gothic men, the Arabs, and the Renaissance men, it is that monument. It is arid. Its long walls, bare and gray, are of a frightful sadness. It arises from a desert of stone, alone with the somber sun. Philip II died there in a cell without an opening to the sky.

Toward the end of the violent century which had seen Spain seizing Portugal and the two Sicilies, dominating Germany, vanquishing France, thrusting back Islam, conquering America, and launching the Armada against England, Philip II summoned, for the purpose of ornamenting his tomb, certain bad painters who at Genoa were prolonging the death struggle of Rome and of Venice. He was following the example of his father who had secured the service of Titian. But Titian had just died a centenarian, and Philip II, accustomed, since his childhood, to the magnificent forms which Italian art at the moment of its full bloom had been unfolding before his eyes, preferred, as always, the reflection and the husk to the somber spirit whose outline was being traced in the wake of the armies, the missions, and the ships starting forth at his command upon every path of apostleship and conquest. It is possible that Anton Mor, the Hollander turned Spaniard, who was so profoundly impressed with the pale faces and the feverish glances seen at his court, and that the Castilians, Sanchez Coello and Pantoja de la Cruz, whose sad and haughty spirit had bowed so spontaneously before the harsh etiquette which held the bored infantas upright in their stiff dresses, had declared themselves unable to decorate the walls. Morales, the mystic and barbarous painter of Estremadura, was not made for this task, either, and, besides, he was about to die. But it was already known that there were good painters at Valencia. At Cordova there existed a flourishing school. And above all, there was, at Toledo, an artist, who had himself been formed by the Italians, and who was painting, at the moment when the Escorial[1] was being finished, one of the greatest works of painting,[2] revealing, at a single stroke, the soul of Spain to itself—he, a Greek reared in Venice, at the very time that the Spanish hesitated to affirm it.



MORALES. Pietà
(*Academy of St. Fernando, Madrid*).

II

Philip II was certainly not capable of raising his funereal piety to the level of the passion which filled the little church in Toledo with faces made livid by the rush of blood to the heart, and with eyes of fever and of wild adoration, and with bony hands all lifted toward heaven. Otherwise, something great could have resulted from his meeting with Greco. When Theotocopuli arrived in Toledo, hardly twenty years had elapsed from the time that Ignatius of Loyola, his thigh broken and rebroken, had dragged himself to the altar of the Virgin to lay his sword upon it. Don John of Austria was nailing the banner of Christ to the topmast of the vessels which he was to lead to Lepanto. Teresa of Avila had just finished burning the last ashes of her flesh. For forty years she had welcomed the flame of the south, the scorching of the rocks, the odor of the orange trees, the cruelty of the soldiers, the sadism of the executioners, and the taste of the Host and of wine in order to torture and purify, in the fire of all her senses turned back toward her inner life, the heart she offered to her divine lover. Within the country, the Holy Office never allowed the fire to die out around any stake. Abroad, the captains, dressed in black, led their lean men, fed on gunpowder, to fight, rosary in hand, against the Reformation. The Duke of Alba deluged Flanders with fire and blood. The flames of torture and of battles attested, over all the earth, the fidelity of Spain to her vow.

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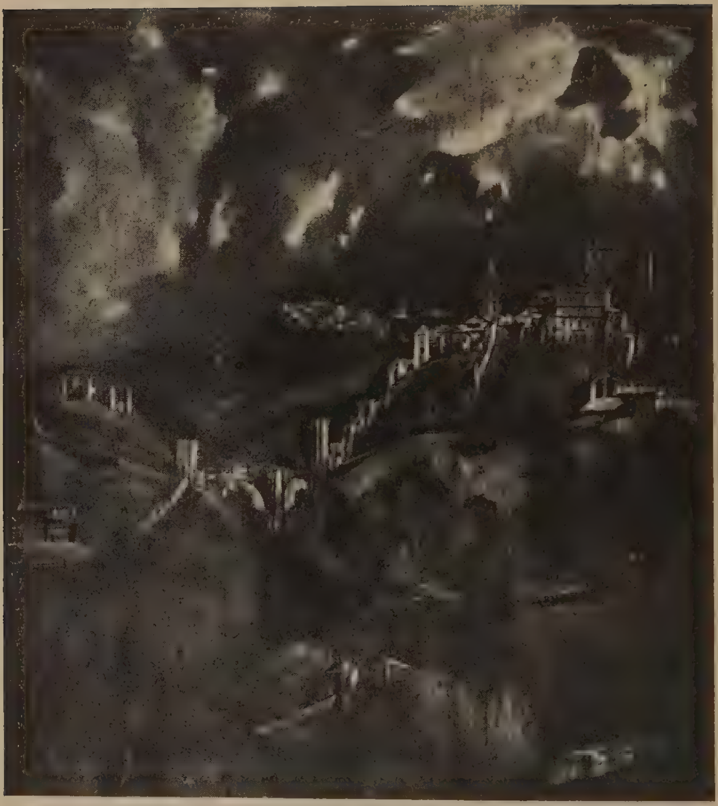
[1] Built from 1563 to 1584.

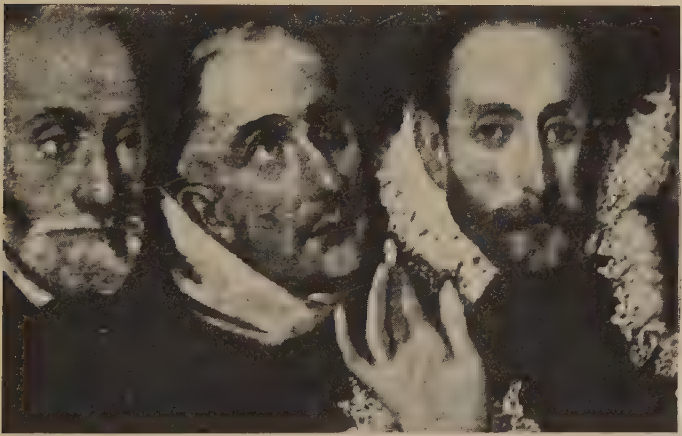
[2] "The Burial of the Count of Orgaz" dates from 1584.

The Cretan, who still saw in the depths of his memory the red and narrow gleam lighting up the icons in the orthodox chapels and whom Titian and Tintoretto had initiated into painting in their Venice, where the bed of purple and of flowers was already prepared for royal deaths, brought into this tragic world the fervor of ardent natures in which all the new forms of sensuality and of violence enter in tongues of fire. In reality, this young man of twenty-five years was old in his



El Greco. View of Toledo (*Private collection*).

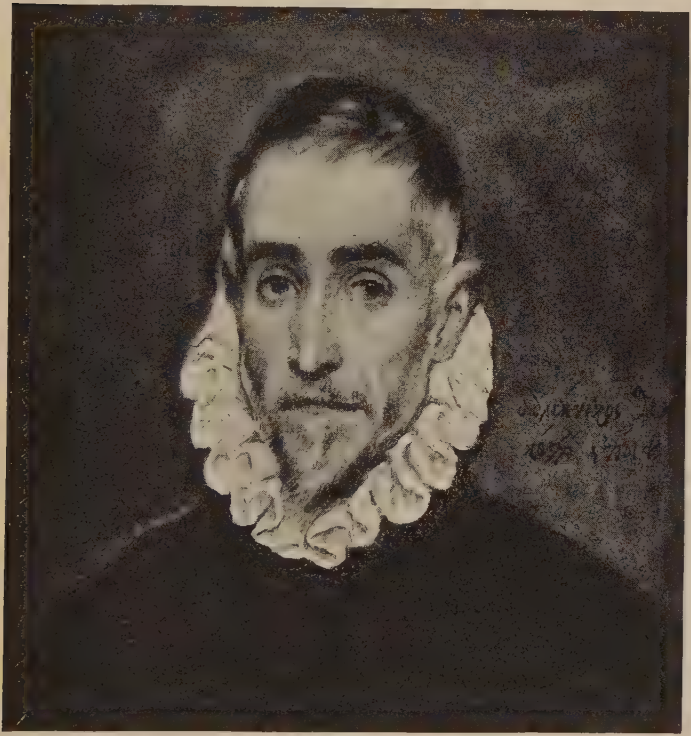
civilization, a thing full of neuroses centuries old, and subjugated by the first shock of the savage aspect of the country in which he was arriving and by the accentuated character of the people amid whom he was going to live. Toledo is made of granite. The landscape round about is terrible, of a deadly aridity, with its low bare hills filled with shadow in their hollows, with the rumble of its caged torrent, and with its huge trailing clouds. On sunny days it shines with flame, it is as livid as a cadaver in winter. Only occasionally and slightly is the greenish uniformity of the stone touched by the pale silver of the olive trees, by the light note of pink or blue from a painted wall. But there is no rich land, no leafy foliage: it is a fleshless skeleton in which nothing living moves, a sinister absolute where the soul has no other refuge than the wild solitude or cruelty and misery as it awaits death.



El Greco. The burial of the Count of Orgaz, detail (*Toledo*).

With this pile of granite, this horror, and this somber flame, Greco painted his pictures. It is a terrifying and splendid painting, gray and black, lit with green reflections. In the black clothing there are only two gray notes, the ruffs and the cuffs from which bony heads and pale hands come forth. Soldiers or priests —it is the last effort of the Catholic tragedy. Already they wear mourning. They are burying a warrior in his steel, and now look only to heaven. Their gray faces have the aridity of the stone. Their protruding bones, their dried skin, and their eyes, deeply sunken in their hollow orbits, look as if they were seized and shaped by metal pincers. Everything which defines the skull and the face is pursued over the hard surfaces, as if the blood no longer coursed through the already withered skin. One would say that a cord of nerves went forth from the vital center and was drawing the skin toward it. Only the eye is burning and fixed, expressing the will to reach the fire of death by dint of rendering life sterile. One follows the glance inward, it leads to the implacable heart. The mouths are like slits. The hair is thin through fasting, asceticism, and the slow asphyxiation rising from braziers burning in closed rooms. The wind of the desert seems to have passed over the scene.

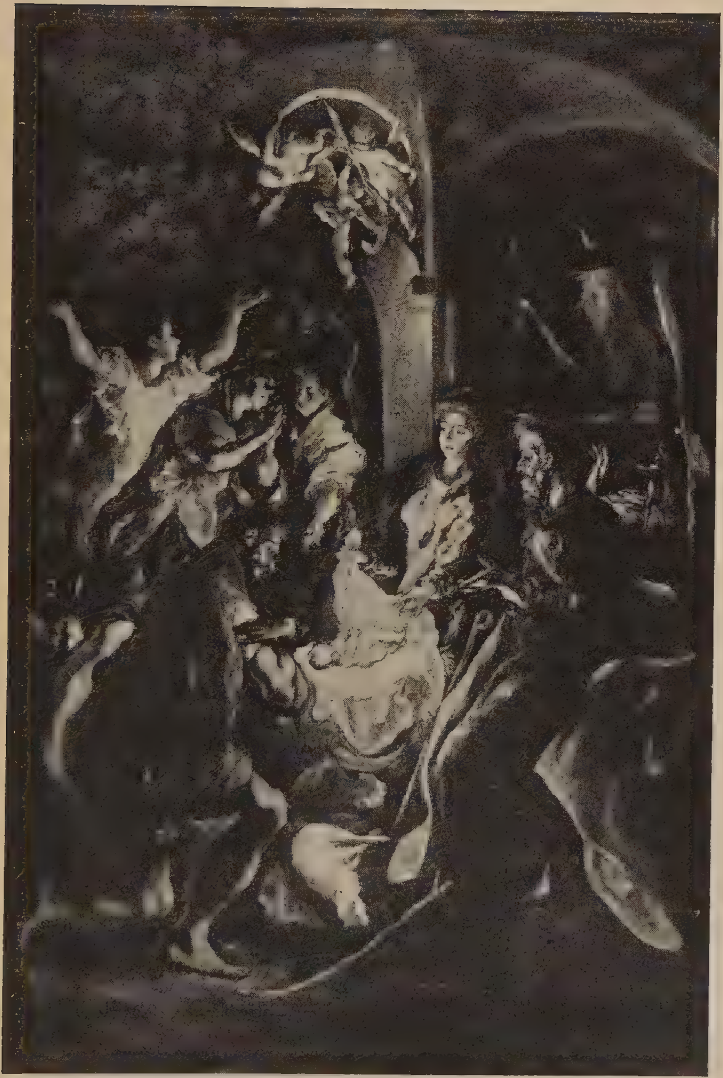
When the red robe flooded with gold and the golden miter of a bishop spread forth, on backgrounds uniformly gray and black, the sumptuous memories brought back from Venice and the Orient, one would say that the painter was playing with his power of controlling the voices of the world in order to give more accent to the dull splendor of the gray faces, and to the harmonies of death and dust which mount like a hymn to the silent joy of offering in sacrifice to the divine spirit of life all the joys which it spreads before us. Remorse at having been born pursues the painter until the end, but when he expresses it in his art, the magnificence which it takes on avenges him for his terrors. Whatever the elements of the higher equilibrium which a great artist pursues—almost always



El Greco. Portrait of an unknown man (*Prado*).

unknown to himself—whether the most completely purified mysticism or the most violent sensualism guides him, he is not a great artist unless he realizes through them those mysterious symphonies in which both the matter and the soul of life seem present and mingled forever with all eternity. It is not necessary that above Greco's groups, spectral angels of superhuman size should arise, or that, behind his drooping Christ there should be enormous grayish clouds which isolate Him from the universe; the somber glow is everywhere, in the raised foreheads, the hollow orbits, the arid earth, and the habits of black velvet. It is in him, the ardent center of all these things, a profound and living poem fashioned by the encounter of obedience and liberty, of the broad and voluptuous world whence he comes with the harshest soil and the most tragic people of Europe, of the severest spirit of western Catholicism with completely disordered memories of Eastern orthodoxy.

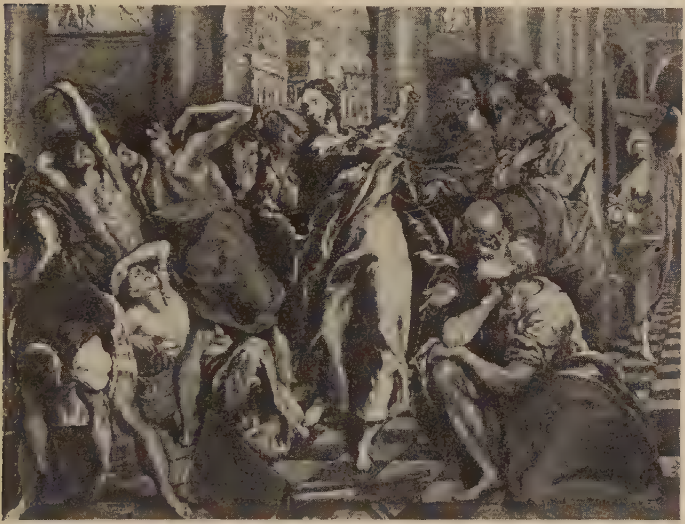
Never did the Christian ideal express, with greater anxiety, its impotence to divide life into two sections. The spirit tries to tear itself away, but in vain. What is beautiful in the divine forms is always borrowed from the science he possessed of terrestrial form, and it always returns to them. At the end of his life he painted like one in a hallucination, in a kind of ecstatic nightmare, where the preoccupation with expressing the spirit alone pursued him. Deformation appears in his pictures more and more, lengthening the bodies, attenuating the fingers, and hollowing the masks. His blues, his winelike reds, and his greens seem lit by some livid reflection sent to him from the near-by tomb and the hell caught sight of from eternal bliss. He died before realizing the form of the dream which haunted him, perhaps because he himself was too old, and no longer found in his hardened bones and in his irritated and weak nerves the power he had possessed for seeking, in love of the world's appearances, the means of comparing and supporting his vision. And yet, what an effort! When we enter one of those



El Greco. The Nativity (*Metropolitan Museum, New York*).

Spanish churches where, on days of service, the gleam of the tapers and the vapor of the incense make us forget for a moment the horror or vulgarity of the images of which we catch a glimpse, we must also carry on with ourselves one of those combats which leave us enervated and somewhat shaken with that intoxication in which the ecstasy of the paradise desired effaces the soul and the body of those who try to forget. He alone could see arms lifted as if to raise the weight of the heavens and to draw aside its veils. Standing at the foot of the Cross, he alone was able to pierce the shadow which rises from all sides like an accomplice to hide the murder; and it is with a terrible glance that he follows the phantom horsemen who enter a hollow road. He alone has seen among those who will to know no more of the earth, forms drawn out as if in prayer, aspiring wholly toward something higher, hands which seem prolonged into supernatural lights, drooping and emaciated trunks, and also young nude bodies which he cannot tear from the innocence of life, but around which circles a phosphorescent glow which comes no one knows whence.

At the remote origin of that invincible elegance which never left him, however much he was gripped by the need to express more than he could, one found the Greek, the Greek of the forgotten ages, the Hellene. The wraith of the gods which still wandered on the shores of the southern sea had drunk a strong wine from the golden cup of Venice and had permitted itself to be carried along, still not entirely consumed even by Greco, to the burning deserts of stone where the aridity of things offers the mind no other avenue than that of death. It was that wraith—it could not die, it had survived the twelve centuries of constraint imposed by the degenerating Orient upon the Byzantine images—over which one would say that there mounts a long pale flame, like those wandering fires which dance upon the marshes. It is the witness of the impotence of genius to detach itself from its roots, and of the majesty which it assumes when it consents to nourish itself from them. Greco must have fasted and worn sackcloth. He must have followed, with bare feet, the processions across the powdered granite with his ankles cut by shackles, bearing a heavy metal cross, and masked with a monk's hood in order not to have the pride of his humiliation. He must have passed the burning nights, when passion is compelled to roll in the torture of voluntary chastity, so that in the morning he might carry his exasperated strength into the ever-livid faces intent on heaven and into the garments, always black, which bear witness to our grief at having



El Greco. Christ driving the money changers from the temple (*Private collection*).

lived. No matter. He had a daughter. He loved children and women, and ever the burning shadow and the bare landscape. His whole will to be superior to life crossed and recrossed the powerful center of the life which, when one has felt its burning, sends its lava into death itself and the eternal shadows and the dust of bones.

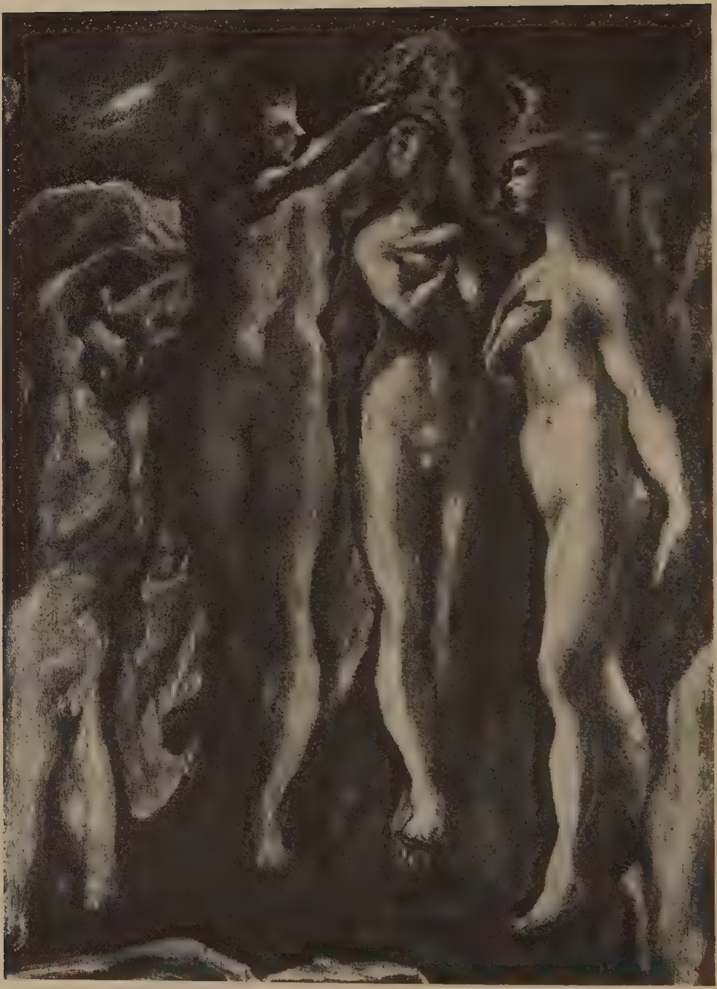
Beyond existence, when our memory is burnt out, there is, to be sure, nothing of us that remains. However, if somewhere there is a place where shadows wander, if in some sinister valley there are cadavers which stand upright and living specters which have not yet lost their form, Domenico Theotocopuli alone, after Dante, has entered there. One would say that he is exploring a dead planet, that he is descending into extinct volcanoes where ashes accumulate and a pale half-veiled moon sheds its light. But all of that has been seen by him. Spain presents such aspects under the snow, in winter, or in the torrid days when the sun has calcined the grass, when there is nothing more in space than the vibration of silence coming from nowhere, to lay its deathlike weight upon the heart, and when livid mirages and gloomy metallic lakes are formed and effaced upon the seared horizon.

III

Greco delivered the Spanish soul. After him the flame mounts, straight and high, to die almost suddenly. Nowhere else was there ever an evolution so rapid and so brief, were there rarer and prouder spirits, or was there a darkness more profound before the sudden outburst and after the unexpected fall. Spain is an apparition—emerging from the shadow and reentering it after having, with terrible violence and in the light of gold and of swords, traversed history and passion. Two or three men express this soul in less than a century, and they rise to such a height that they are among the few men whom man can no longer do without. The constraint was so great that few souls burst forth, but when they did there were such forces within them that they shattered all the bonds of the intelligence and the heart. Don Quixote was starting forth on all the dusty roads, alone and free to act out his dream, and master of the conquest of Illusion.

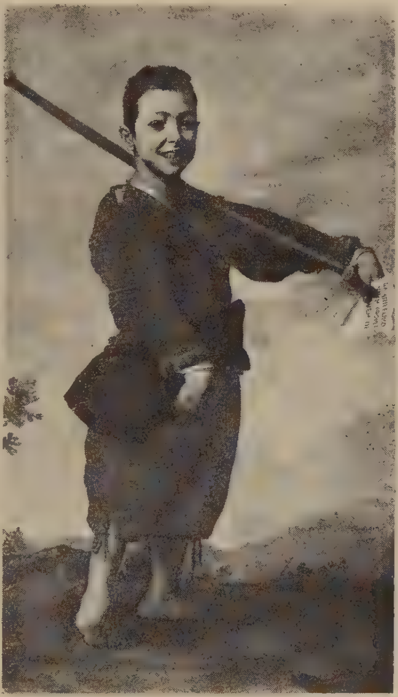
When Velasquez came to Madrid, he must have passed through Toledo. He therefore brought to Castile, which, little by little, was to exert so strong an influence upon him, the profound teaching of Italy interpreted by a Byzantine who had grasped Spain, and the spirit of Andalusia, where he learned his trade. It was not from Pacheco, who scarcely knew the trade, nor from Herrera, with whom he spent scarcely enough time to learn the grinding of colors. But Pacheco had fine pictures and received many artists. His studio was considered the center of Seville, queen of Spain and of America, the city of gold and of fire. Góngora reigned there, Cervantes had come there. Pablo de Céspedes, the good painter of Cordova, brought there the ideas of the Roman masters. Flemish pictures were shown there. There was a thorough acquaintance there with the pictures of Ribalta, an old painter of Valencia, greatly influenced by Correggio and the Bolognese, but a robust and strong nature whom Zurbarán consulted. Some works by Ribera, his best pupil, must have penetrated there.

In any case, the first pictures of Velasquez and almost all those of Zurbarán bear the imprint of the science which defines Ribera and of which Martinez Montañés, at the period when they were studying in Seville, was also giving examples so severely honest—the statues of painted wood in which he renewed the



El Greco. The temptation of Saint Anthony (?), detail (*Private collection*).

old art of the Spanish sculptors, by borrowing from the Christian drama the elements of tragic naturalism the need for which they express. The pitiless realism of Spain went through and through the Catholic fiction in order to seek behind it that which is bitterest and barest in life. In Spain, Catholicism is not, as in Italy, a political system, or, as in France, an æsthetic and moral discipline; it is a narrow reality which daily existence exhibits afresh. The sacred legend is history, living history. The Virgin is a woman of the people with a dirty child in her arms; the Magdalen a filthy girl, worn by debauchery and misfortune. They have all seen the heretic crucified or burned, they have smelled the blood of beasts which the burning sand soaks up. They have followed the red tracks of the nauseous carts which carry the dead horses out of the arena. The saint manifests himself to the Spaniard under the appearance of a beggar, of a cripple, of a blind man with his eyes covered with flies. The sores of the sick, the carrion drying or rotting in the sun, the dead mule

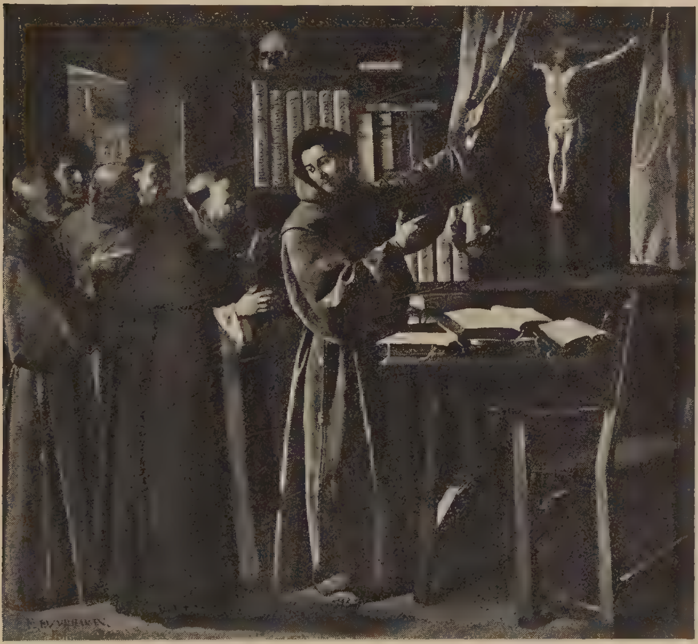


RIBERA. The clubfoot (*Louvre*).

skinned by a clubfooted man, the dwarf, the idiot, and the infirm—whatever is ugliest and most terrible on the earth—is the spectacle which feeds the soul, thirsting for obedience to a sinister destiny. Even to-day, in certain villages, the peasants take down from the Cross the wooden Christ of their Calvary and flagellants pray and bawl and fall on their knees around it. Cadavers of wax lying in open coffins are carried through the streets. Crucified figures covered with human hair and skin are hung up in the chapels. Valdés Leal, the painter of Cordova, painted biers torn open, dead bishops eaten by worms and fermenting in their purple —shining harmonies in the fetid night of a cavern.

It was in order to have the somber strength necessary to say all this that José Ribera departed in his youth for Italy, led a miserable life there, committed murder, perhaps, triumphed, and learned to follow obstinately the play of the muscular fibers, the tension of ligaments, of tendons ready to crack, and of the bony structure clearly seen under dead or dried skin. It was in order to give greater relief in the dramatic light to the projections and contractions stamped by suffering on limbs grown thin, on hollow torsos, on wasted chins, that he asked of Caravaggio how he sent back into the opaque shadow everything that did not express ecstasy or despair. His ascetics are covered with mud and dust. In the carrying out of his work he adopts the cruelty of his executioners and the obstinacy of his martyrs—that thirst for reality which makes brothers of the two types. One cannot reproach him for his too faultless muscles, because they will be broken on the wheel or hang listlessly away after having been broken. One pardons him for his bituminous and black backgrounds because sometimes he rends them in order to show there the vivid skies in which solidly modeled clouds trail.

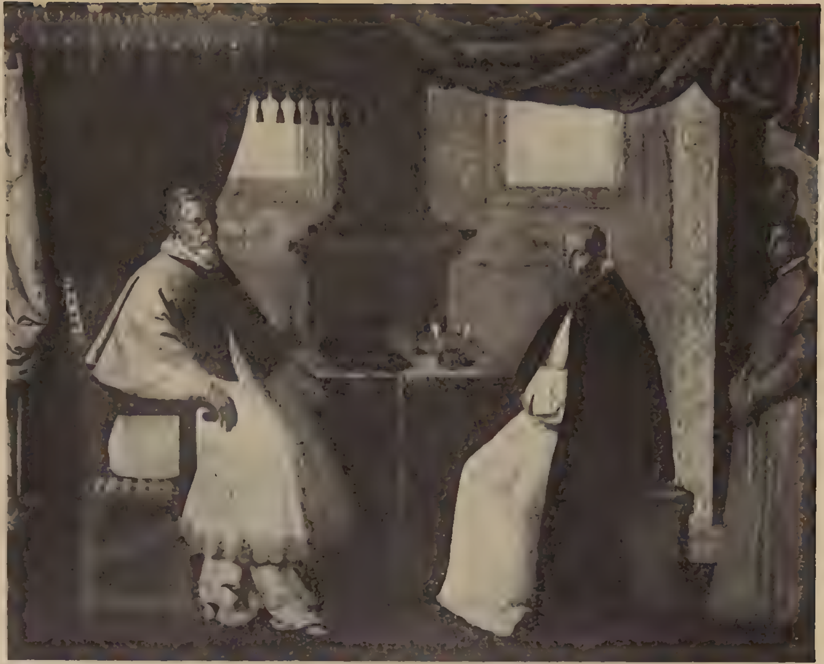
One need but see those rough-skinned fingers and those knotty joints, those stained beards, those dirty faces, those wrinkles, those bared teeth, and those reddened and watering eyes to recognize how the pitiless will which they express gives to tragic life and to death their nakedest aspect. When one looks for a long time, one sees, arising out of the depth of the reddish shadow like ripening fruits, tender faces of women already caressed by that condensation of amber, of silver, and of pearl which penetrates the flesh with Velasquez and Goya, and for which Murillo substitutes powder, rouge, and the smoke of incense.



ZURBARÁN. Saint Bonaventure and Saint Thomas Aquinas (*Berlin*).

Perhaps he should have lived far away from the School in his Valencian Spain where the palm trees and the orange bushes cast a shadow, warmer, heavier, and more odorous than in other places. But then he would doubtless not have afforded to the masters of Andalusia and of Castile the hard, firm structure which offers itself, from time to time, to support their miraculous and hesitating edifices.

It was in this sense that he was to influence the young artists of Seville, and with added vigor because almost all of them had received the counsel of Francisco Herrera, who was as much dominated by the masters of Venice as Ribera was by Correggio and the Neapolitan painters. Las Roelas, a priest of Seville who was considered by the Andalusian school until the time of Murillo, had transmitted to him its external formulas. Herrera opened men's eyes. Backgrounds came into existence in the depths of his canvases, and with them that trembling and delicate space which characterizes both the Venetian and the Spanish painters of the mature period, that space of silvery rose against which he could henceforward spread out, without fear of contrasts too violent and of oppositions too sharply defined, the brilliant colors imposed upon his taste by the savagery and the fire of his nature. After him the road is free; Velasquez and, later on, Goya, can come. That which is properly Spanish, not in the character of the forms of the country and the faces of the men which Greco had seized immediately, but in the very matter of the atmosphere and the mysterious, veiled bond between the surroundings and the spots which tell of objects, is outlined with Herrera. Besides this, a quickness of decision hurries him along. Of school composition he has assimilated everything that was needful to the Spaniards, who are profound impressionists, but inapt in giving a logical distribution to the masses and

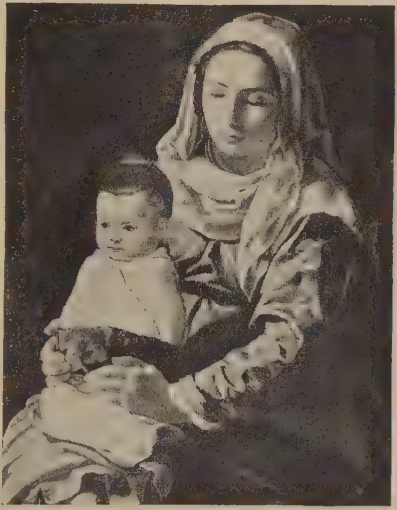


ZURBARÁN. Saint Bruno and the Pope (*Seville*).

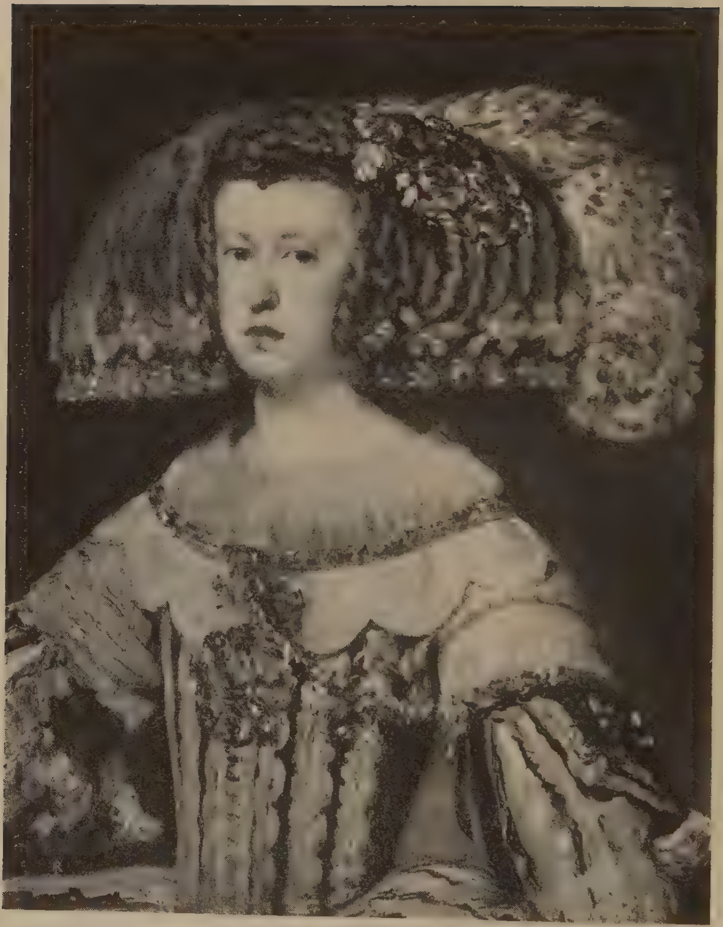
in imposing upon the forms the intellectual hierarchy which gives so dangerous a strength to Greco-Latin art. He has learned from the Italians the superficial arrangement of groups and the approximate ordering of the phrasing. Furious improvisation may play over these dead themes and, in an equilibrium swiftly attained, will raise Spanish passion until it staggers to its full height, like a wounded man drunk with pride who insists on conquering before he dies.

Zurbarán and Velasquez, who come from the same sources, are of the same age, and express that passion when it is free, even if it is not the most intense and uncompromising; both will abandon allegorical pretexts and conventional idealism. Both will agree to forget that which they have learned in order to attain directly that desire for reality imposed on all by their passion—from the executioner who prays and from the priest who kills to the king who lives as a prisoner and who is buried in fustian. Inasmuch as Roelas, Ribalta, Ribera, Montañés, and Herrera transposed the history or the legend which they relate into the scenes of daily life appearing to them in the crudest aspects, they will seek, in these very scenes, the motive for the poems in paint which will gain in veiled emotion, in intimate profundity, or in naked majesty that which they will lose in anecdotal interest or in picturesqueness. They will renounce the pursuit of the life of the imagination for which they are not fitted.

One cannot say that the people which conquered the ocean and America, which dreamed Don Quixote, a thousand novels and ten thousand plays, and wrested from its nightmare the etchings of Goya, was lacking in imagination. But its inventive faculty develops only in the direction of the life before it, which it searches or forces or disfigures without ever seeking in it the symbols of a form to be organized. It does not combine, it does not generalize; it creates its illusion from that which exists. The adoration of Goya for woman appears in the manner in which he speaks of her, not in the aspect which she has and which he leaves to her, an aspect frequently common and sometimes repellent. Don Quixote sees a queen in a tavern girl, a helmet in a barber's bowl, an army in a herd. To express his ideal, Cervantes can do no more than make of it the caricature of reality.


VELASQUEZ. The Virgin and Child (*Prado*).

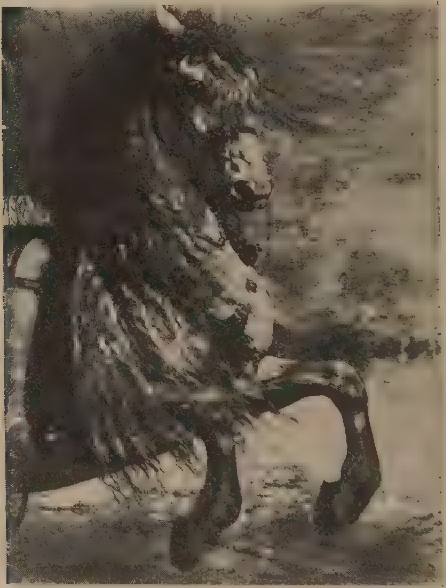
The more the culture of Zurbarán and Velasquez develops, the farther they will penetrate into this pitiless probity. At the base of it, the one will find the bareness of rock and the virile coldness required to despoil their mystic envelope of the practices of annihilation into which Spain plunges after her expansion; the other will find the harmonies revealed by space when one understands how to contemplate it with that passion for isolating oneself in their echoes with which a musician listens to the sounds of the world. Education, race, and the period make fraternal spirits of the two painters. He who goes to live in the savage monasteries of the deserts of Estremadura sometimes opens a window in order to perceive in the distance that aërial palpitation which Velasquez causes to circulate around



VELASQUEZ. Portrait of Mariana of Austria, detail (*Prado*).

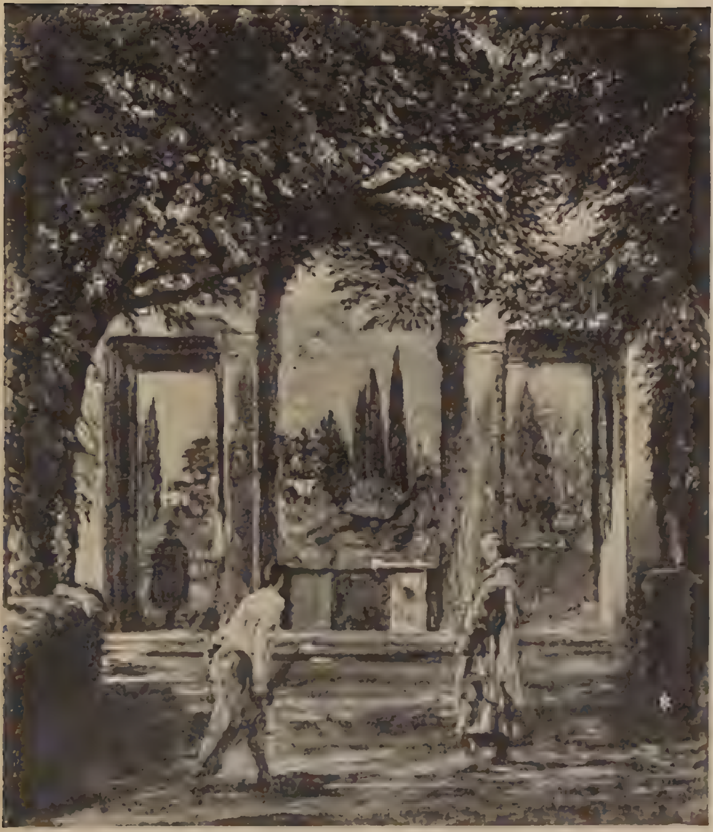
the forms themselves like a murmur of color. He who is at the court, fettered by the ennui of its etiquette, sees in princes the austerity which Zurbarán lends to churchmen. But Velasquez flees from Spain at times; he returns to it with horizons more vast, around him space widens out to immensity, his soul seems to have wings as he approaches his end, and, passing over periods and peoples, his mind carries on its dialogue with certain superior minds which all peoples understand and which no periods can exhaust. Zurbarán did not cross the moral frontiers which Spain imposed upon him.

He seems to obey monastic rule. The walls of the cells, their tables, their wooden benches, and the fustian of the cowls are not more bare than his strength. The sterility of Spain is in his sepulchral cloisters where meditation revolves around death-heads and books bound in skin. The white or gray robes fall as straight as shrouds. Round about, the vaults are thick, the pavement is cold, the light is dead. Only at rare intervals does a red carpet or a blue ribbon animate this aridity. The voluptuousness of painting reveals itself in the hard bread and the raw roots of the meal eaten in silence, or in a hand or the earthy face of a cadaver, or in the mortuary cloth of silver-gray. But those spectral visages, those lusterless garments, that bare wood, those protruding bones, those ebony crosses on which not a reflection trembles, those yellow books with their red edges ranged in clear-cut order like the hours which divide up life until the end into periods of dismal observances, all unite in assuming the aspect of an implacable architecture which faith itself imposes upon plastics, forbidding it everything which is not a rigid line, a bare surface, an opaque tone, a straight shadow, or a precise and hard volume. A monk in prayer weighs so heavily upon his knees that his head, when he lifts it, seems to raise the stone of a sepulcher. Those distributing or taking food invest the need to live with a solemnity which carries over into the tablecloth, the glasses, the knives, and the victuals. Those lying on their deathbed imprint upon the life surrounding them the ridigity of death.



Velasquez. Portrait of Philip III, detail (*Prado*).

In this severe painting, everything seems gray. One would call it the color of ashes. If the granite grays which form the very substance of Greco's painting, if the silver grays of Velasquez and Herrera and the pearl grays of Goya, did not leave in our vision their rare reflection, one would think that Zurbarán meant to give to the men withdrawn from the world, whom he has painted, the appearance of abandoned hearths and of braziers grown cold. But all Spain is gray. Its denuded plateaus have the aspect of a dead star covered with ashes by its volcanoes. Spain is a monotonous, deserted expanse rolling unevenly, in which, here and there, one imagines a herd by the dust that it raises. It is not only the flight of the clouds or the trails of snow on the mountains which



VELASQUEZ. The Villa Medici (*Prado*).

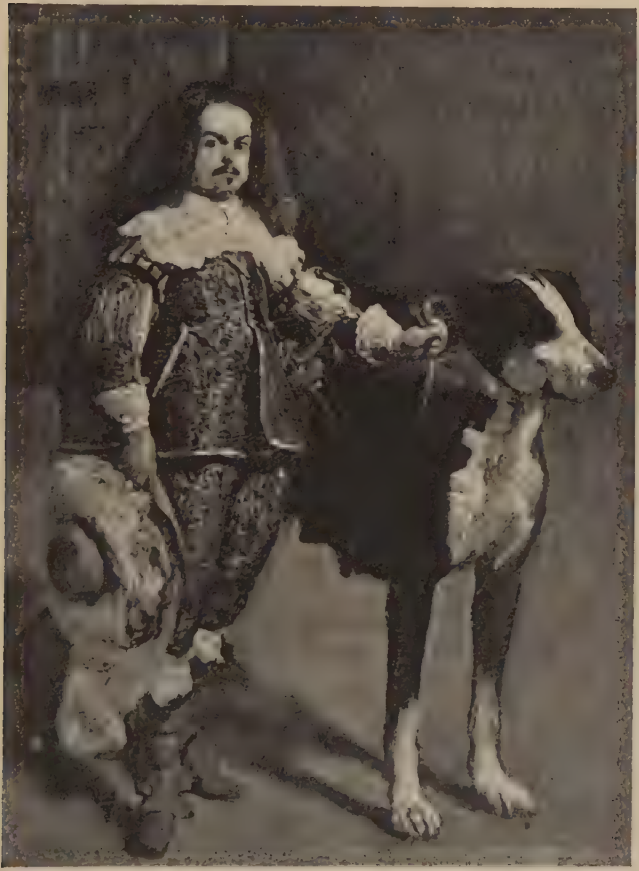
pour down upon the country that which resembles leaden dust heaped up in places. Toward evening, before they are colored with pink, pale and almost burned out, the hills at the horizon seem touched with silver. When one stands on a height overlooking the cities, one sees the gray expanse round about. The white houses painted with green gold, sometimes covered with granite, and touched with blue and pink, take on a surface like dull tin, occasionally darkened by the accent of a black cypress. An unhappy soil, horrible near by when it shows only its fleshless bones, mysterious from afar, delicate, and veiled with impalpable harmonies born of the varying shades of color in the cultivated land combining with the shadows of the clouds to bring their gentle vibration into the gray uniformity.

IV

This savagery and this subtlety are found in the painters. The work in itself is sinister, never masked; the deformity of face, of body, and of soul is paraded without shame. They do not discriminate. Death, horror, everything is good in their eyes, and everything collaborates willingly in their task. But as soon as one looks between the forms, the nightmare vanishes, something unexpected and unknown is unveiled—a circulation of aërial atoms, a discreet envelopment, a transparent and faintly tinted shade which floats around them and transfigures them. Velasquez, after the age of fifty, never again painted sharply defined things, he wandered around the objects with the air and the twilight; in the shadow and transparence of the backgrounds he surprised the colored palpitations which he used as the invisible center of his silent symphony. He was no longer taking from the world anything more than the mysterious exchanges which cause forms and tones to interpenetrate one another in a secret and continuous progression, whose course is not manifested or interrupted by any clash or any shock. Space reigns. An aërial wave seems to glide over the surfaces, impregnating itself with their visible emanations in order to define and model them, and to carry away everywhere else a kind of perfume, a kind of echo of them which it disperses over all surrounding space as an imponderable dust.

The world where he lived was sad. A decadent king, sickly princes, idiots, dwarfs, invalids, certain monstrous jesters dressed like lords whose function it was to laugh at themselves and make others outside the law of life laugh at them—all bound up in etiquette, plots, and lies, and united by the confessional and by remorse. At the gates the *auto-da-fé*, the silence, the rapid crumbling of a still terrible power, and a land where no soul had the right to grow. No matter. In a country, in a court where no one, the king least of all, could free himself or desired to free himself from any of the servitudes imposed by the strength of the soil and of the faith, the painter alone knew how to dominate the fatal character of the surroundings. For his needs he had mastered the grandiose and lugubrious landscape which undulates at the feet of the Guadarramas. Condemned never to paint anything but kings, buffoons, and beasts, he had seized upon the silvery matter which invades the azure of the plateaus of Castile, that he might mingle it with the pallid faces and the dark costumes of the princes, weave it with the air and the steam into flying names, and associate earth and sky with the light harmonies which a horseman, galloping through space, revealed to him alone, in the floating scarfs which traverse the armor, or in the waving plumes of his hat. He possessed everything that trails and quivers in a plain which the mists of the morning or the dust of the evening covers with translucent veils. It is because there is a rift of blue among the storm clouds that a pink ribbon flecks the cuirass of black steel with its unexpected note. In the drops of silver which spatter that cuirass there trembles the diffused splendor of the air. In the whole of a gray picture, with a gray horse—its tail and mane flying in the wind, with gray fringe floating, with a gray sky, a sea stormy and gray, there is just one pink knot between the ears of the animal who bears a proud rider dressed in red and black. The mountains, the blue plains, the distant streaks of snow, the grayish or somber undulation of the ground sown with cork trees and olive trees, are found again in all the grays, in all the blacks shot through with dim blues and with pinks, which the man and the rearing animal impose upon the landscape or receive from it. When there are flames and smoke in the plain, they barely veil the silvery tremble of the clouds, and their reflection does not darken the harmonies of the foreground. His sickly little princes are surrounded by a lyricism of color, contained, veiled, and secret as a great soul, by a diffused light, and by tremors which, running through it, surround their ennui with a retinue so charming that they seem to bear only the shadow of the pitiless crown.

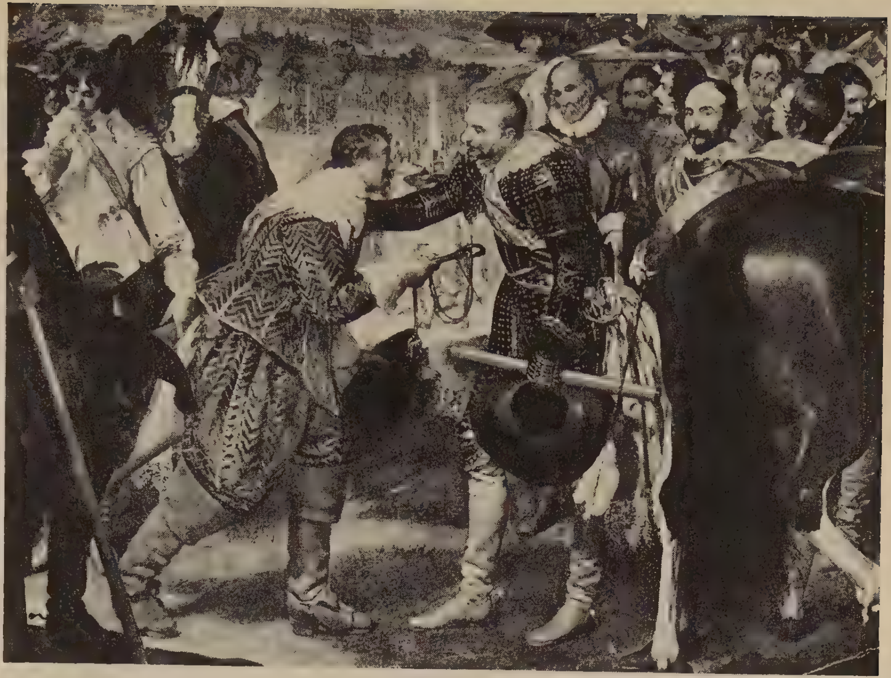
A spirit of nostalgia floats in the air, one sees neither the ugliness nor the sadness nor the funereal and cruel direction given to that crushed childhood. Whether Velasquez followed his masters to the hunt or returned with them to the dark alcazar, he remained the silent friend of the dying race which only an intelligence of sovereign freedom could deliver for us from indifference and death. He alone knew, when he went through the livid corridors, how to preserve in his memory the image of a melancholy and subtle apparition, of a wandering harmony lending to the light the fugitive sheen which it turns on the things that present themselves to its kiss. For him alone the little infantas were not burned-out beings with greenish, sullen faces, martyrs swaddled in the robes of state which weighed heavily on their



Velasquez. Antonio el Inglés (*Prado*).

breasts and prevented them from playing, leaping, running, and enjoying the birdlike life of little girls. He loved them. He himself had had two daughters, one of whom had died as a child. On their wan faces he followed all the reflections of the pitying world which mingled with the pallid blood, with the moist lips, and with the astonished eyes, the silvery daylight shining from red curtains, from gray and pink bodices where at times a red or black ribbon alone gave a darker accent, like a corolla bursting forth in a field of young wheat. The blond hair and the pinks of the costume encircled the frail heads with a vague aureole which gave back to the amber air a little of the torpid and charming life stifling behind their foreheads. A transparent handkerchief, spread out like a butterfly's wing, gave glimpses of paler blacks under it, and more attenuated pinks and distant blues. Upon a dress of rose crossed by stripes of thin silver plates and enlivened by spots of mauve, he surprised, with a quickening pulse, a red rose in the childish fingers. The lassitude of those hands resting on the backs of chairs, or the hoops of skirts, filled him with an ardor so tender that, without ever confessing it, he lavished upon them all the deep caresses which the world of the air reserves for that which bathes in it. Under all that trembling silver, his hesitating red and pink appear like a bed of flowers covered with dew at the hour when the light of dawn shines on the hoarfrost of summer.

Velasquez is the painter of evenings, of space, and of silence, even when he paints in broad daylight, even when he paints in a closed room, even when war or the hunt rages around him. As they went out but little in the hours of the day when the air is scorching, when the sun dulls everything, the Spanish painters communed with the evenings. The education of their eye went on in the twilight, and it is then that the

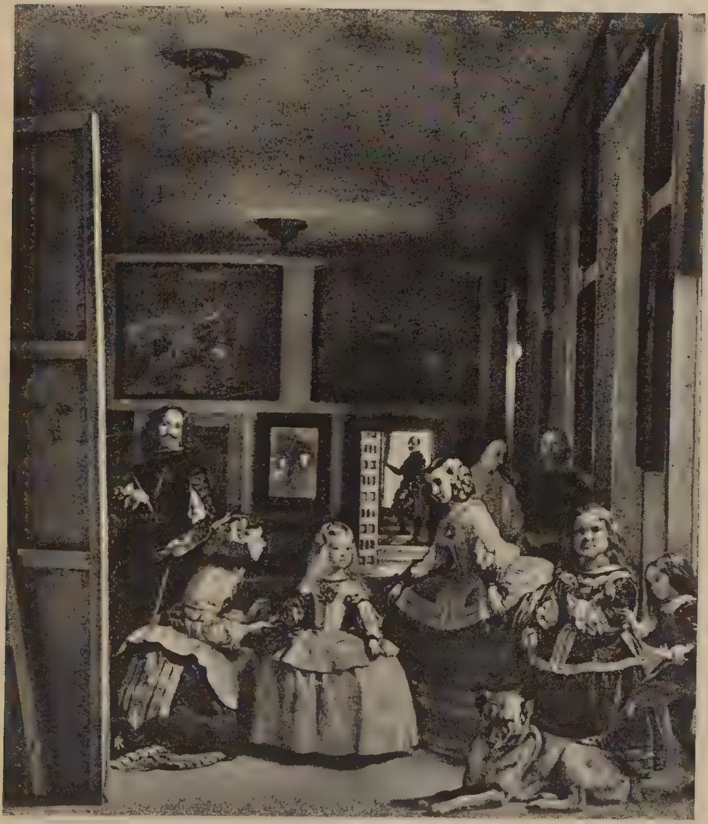


Velasquez. The Surrender of Breda, detail (*Prado*).

signification of Spain in color attains its value. When one has not seen how the night falls over the graded plateaus of Castile or of Estremadura, or over the red and gray plain of la Mancha, one does not know the dull accent, veiled and affecting, which the black capes and hats assume as they silhouette against white walls whose brilliance seems at that moment to be dimmed by a pearly silver. The air takes on an orange tint which reveals a profound intensity in the colors. The rising dust, bathed in the horizontal rays of the setting sun, envelops figures in a blur of amber which half effaces them and paints them against space in somber and trembling spots. Especially when garbed in black, they look like phantoms.

The nearer Velasquez approached his end, the more he sought those harmonies of the twilight in order to transport them into the secretive painting which expressed the pride and discretion of his heart. He abandoned broad daylight, he tended to seize upon the semi-obscurity of rooms where the passages of the planes are more subtle and intimate, where the mystery is increased by a reflection in a glass, by a ray of light coming from without, or by a girl's face covered with a bloom like that of a pale fruit which seems to absorb into its vague and lusterless light the whole of the diffused penumbra. The silvery shadow is rendered animate by the red in the blond hair, by the silver in the black hair, by the greens, the blacks, the pinks, and the infinite grays dispersed like a rain of petals falling where the harmony bids them fall: one would say that all was an apparition at the depth of a great invisible mirror, into which a serene evening enters very slowly. Visions seem to glide; an imperceptible balancing and swaying make one think of music, and when the apparition has disappeared, we do not cease to search our hearts for those beautiful fugitive shadows. They are vanished sisters whom we caught sight of before seeing them, and whom we shall see again without trying.

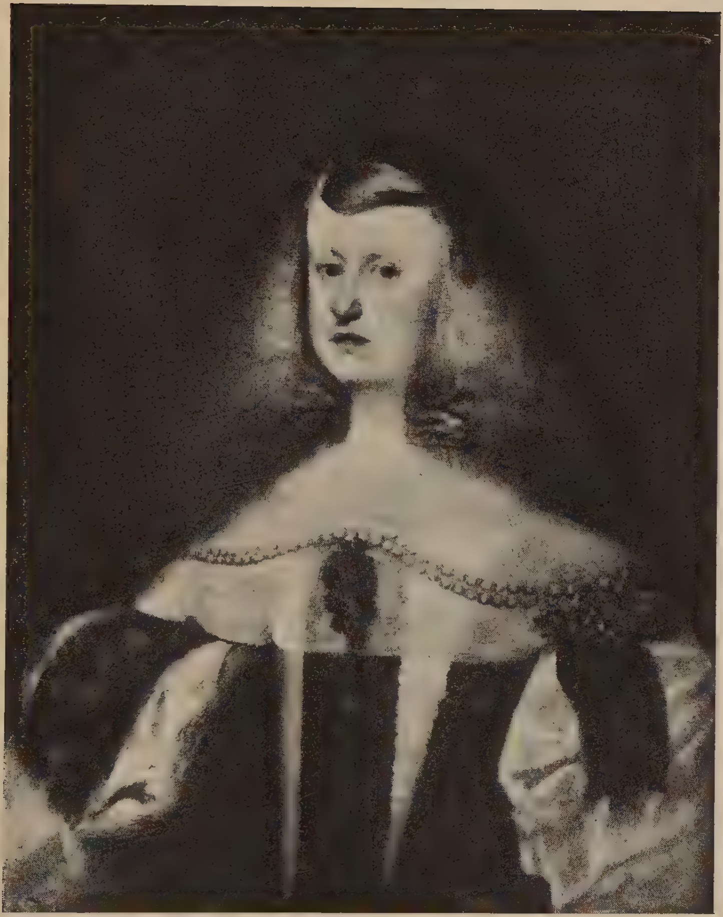
In fact, we are in the same space as they. These



Velasquez. The Maids of Honor (*Prado*).

forms are the reflection which nature assumes in an obedient mind which accepts it in its every appearance, never modifying it to heighten its effect, but purifying it imperceptibly in each of the details which manifest it; and when it has been rendered for us in its ensemble, it has been made into something of slightly finer shades, something more aërial, more discreet and more rare, which is what gives it that exact and supernatural aspect. The mystery is almost terrifying. None of us can watch in the world the progressive spreading forth of the shadow and the light, the secret passage which causes one form to prolong another, without his eyes becoming wearied by the continuous circulation of an atmosphere whose density is all that gives gradation to objects and makes them turn and keep their place. But Velasquez sees these insensible things, and expresses them, without deigning to say toward which direction he is guiding us. He travels amid the fluid forces —inappreciable to another—which define the universe. That which we term line—a symbol permitting us to arrest in space the volumes which are never arrested at any precise point in space—that which we term a spot—the superficial illusion of an eye unable to grasp the flight of contours—that which we term form —an abstraction which does not take into account either the air or the light or the living spirit with which matter is animated—these are conceptions which Velasquez can dispense with. He arranges the elements of color in space following the order of surface and of depth dictated to him by these elements when he has assimilated them with his tranquil power of balancing sensation by taste and measure; and when he has finished his task, there has been performed the miracle of an admirable work wherein the artist does not seem to have intervened.

This feeling for *value*, this constant and apparently facile power of exactly proportioning the image to an objective judgment, is perhaps the mark of the freest intelligence, the one most serene and master of itself

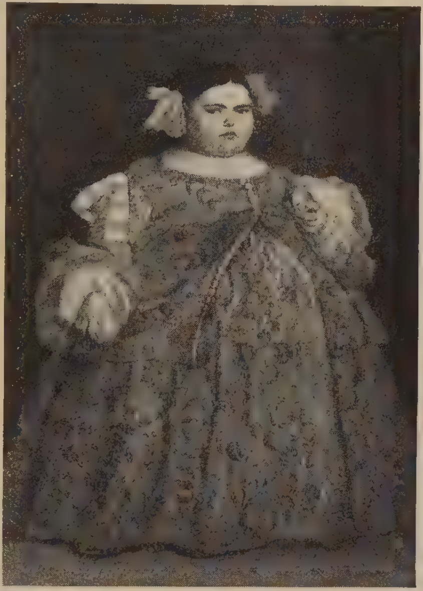


Velasquez. Portrait (*Louvre*).

that ever existed in painting. Raised to this height, virtuosity is a heroic sacrifice. One cannot say that Velasquez never reveals himself. Castilian pride, Andalusian temperament, Oriental fatalism, and Arab nonchalance are all affirmed or divined in those lofty and severe effigies which were painted between the death of Cervantes and the death of Calderón. But the psychological value never trespasses on the plastic value. It stands almost exactly even with it. It envelops itself and remains almost hidden under a precise play of shades and incomparable harmonies. He does not oblige us to see, in "The Lances," the cordial courtesy of the victor, the noble humility of the vanquished, and the spirit which transforms war and, despite the burned plain, the erect weapons, and the cuirasses, raises it above murder and hatred by the simple fact that, momentarily, it passes through a lofty and proud vision. Without saying so, he confides to the trembling water of a mirror the images of modesty or of power in its ennui. He does not compel us to notice the melancholy contrast between feeble princes or colorless queens and the animal that carries them, whose blood beats under the skin of its nostrils, its hocks and its rump, and whose mane flies in the heat of the race and in the steam of its sweat. He does not insist on the irony of the spectacle when he sees approaching an abject dwarf dressed like a prince and leading a formidable dog as tall as himself and threatening to growl, its feet firm, black, as strong as life when it yields to its strength. He scarcely smiles when he writes the name of Don John of Austria under the portrait of a weak-bodied, sneering buffoon, or the name of Menippus or Æsop under that of a beggar. When he paints an idiot, he does not say whether it causes him suffering; he makes the idiot's head and shoulders sway with the stammering of his songs.

When the king, with his long, sad face, is before him, dressed in black, he does not confess that it is his own majesty with which the king is invested. A distinction so royal that it never takes the trouble to try to impose itself, a grandeur detached from itself and conscious of being alone in knowing itself, raises to the level of his heart this world, which is dying little by little.

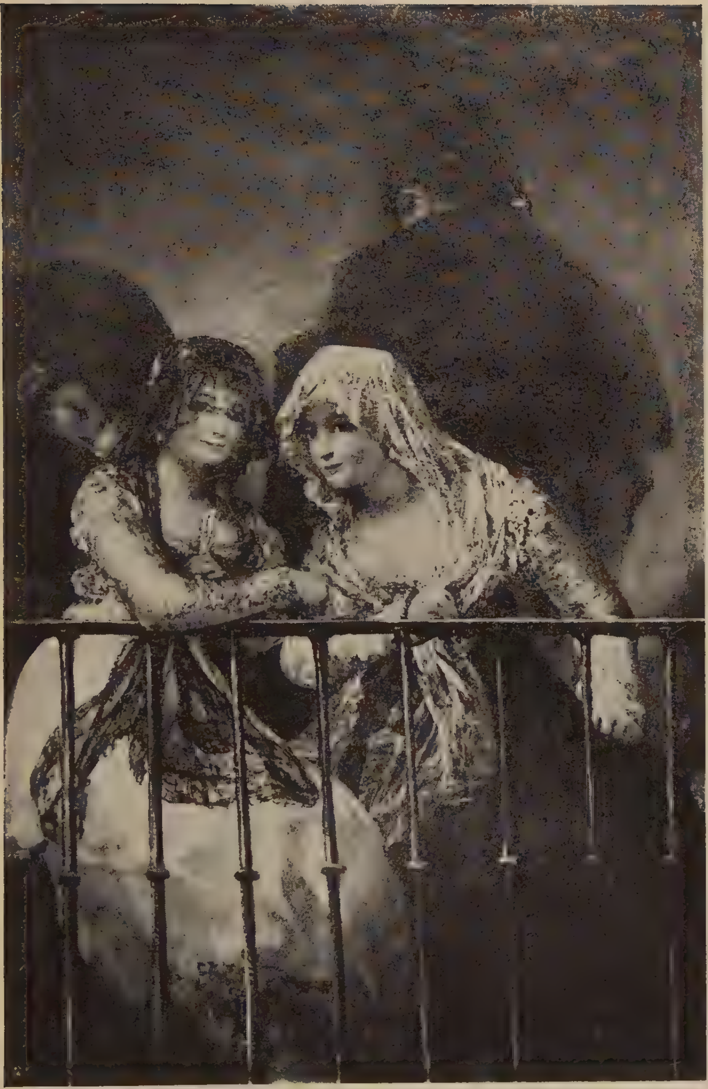
This reserved nobleness is the last of his victories; and his supreme affirmation is the least openly avowed of all, and the most difficult to penetrate. Only a few bright spots vary the prison-like existence. First the sojourn in Madrid of Rubens, at the height of his powers, with whom Velasquez, who was then not yet thirty years old, established a friendship, and by whom he was counseled to go to consult the masters of Rome and Venice on how to discipline a natural generosity. Then the two journeys in Italy which he extended as long as possible and from which he brought back, with the friendship of Ribera and of Poussin, that which only a superior mind can discover there, the instrument with which to free himself. The remainder of the time he lived like a servitor, oppressed with idiotic duties, badly


CARREÑO. Monstrous Girl (*Prado*).

paid, dressed in clothing cast off by his superiors, and painting by accident, when he was charged with a portrait, a decorative subject, or one from religion or history. Each progression was for him not only a victory over himself, but also over the indifferent inertia or the hostile forces which surrounded him. He wrested each one of his works from a solitary and almost forced meditation, thrown back upon himself by the impossibility of finding a kindred mind and of confessing his real soul in any other way than through the works with which he was commissioned, into which he infused his longing and his silence, as if behind a veil almost impenetrable. He did not suspect until quite late, at the hour when the shadow of his days was lengthening along his path, the extent of his secret power to bring from the depth of his passion to the surface of life the image of his unknown illusions. And as his isolation and constraint increased with the years, his proud understanding grew apace, as if he had felt that he would not have the time, before death, to collect his forces completely.

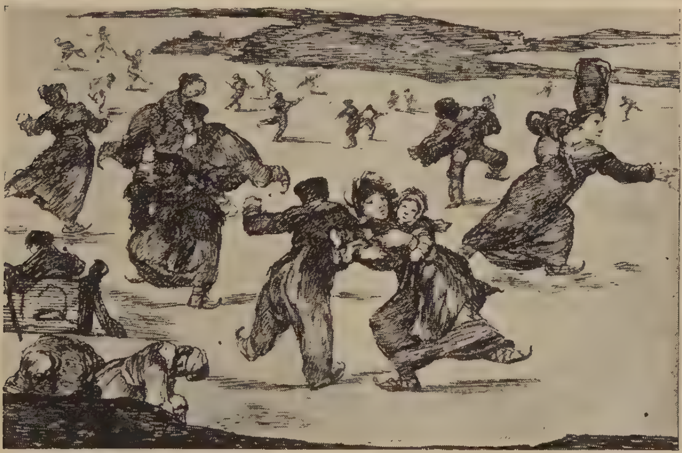
V

Yet it is in this supreme gathering together of forces that Spain, before its sleep and in a last proud effort, lifted up its great isolated figure. "The Lances" and the portraits of the king and queen are the adieu to her age of strength. Now that Spain is vanquished everywhere, the grandiloquent "historical painters" and the manufacturers of heroic portraits are to multiply. Before Velasquez, only one man, because that man was a painter, de Mayno, had known how to subordinate the anecdote represented to the plastic poem which the contemplation of the forms and the sense of the fleeting harmonies of the space of Spain impose on those who neither affirm nor demonstrate before they have used



GOYA. The Majas on the Balcony (*Private collection*) their eyes. After Velasquez, only one man, because that man was a painter, Carreño de Miranda, still had the power to arrest the fall of the spoiled princes, the morose infantas, and the monsters of luxury, in order to continue that history which is made only by those who see and those who create. He shows us protruding jaws, lifeless eyes, hanging lips, monastic robes—the refuge of men of broken will, and of the shadows of grandeur; malicious dwarfed women stifled in fat, misshapen heads, and faces of crime and of horrible simplicity; after that there was nothing. Goya will not come until a century has passed, and then as a kind of miracle. The other followers of Velasquez, his son-in-law del Mazo, the brothers Rizi, and Claudio Coello are good, honest practitioners, of vulgar nature, and heavy, coarse, or too clever in workmanship. Murillo is not a great painter, because he is of a low mind.

He justifies the decision taken by Velasquez in his leaving Seville and by Zurbarán in his returning to his Estremadura. The bigoted and soft atmosphere of the enriched city of Andalusia wore upon the nerves and transformed the most virile beings into sensual women. Herrera is still too savage to allow himself to be impressed, but Montañés possesses no more than a hollow energy. Alonso Cano, his pupil and the studio companion of Velasquez and Zurbarán, is a bombastic painter, and a soft and enervated sculptor, warped by his morbid desire to erect effigies of ascetics with whom he associates pale flames and tender colors, in order to emphasize his effects. The streets smell of incense and rice powder, of lemon flowers and sensuality. The Jesuit is at his ease there; he controls the heart through all the senses. Murillo, through his desolating painting, overwhelms Ribera. His sick and his virgins are professionals. The beggar is always picking his fleas, and the Mother of God always has her eyes raised to heaven and her hands crossed on her heart. He prostitutes his gifts as a painter. Certainly, he expresses the questionable devotion of the city where, on saints' days, idols are carried about, dressed up, and covered with false jewels. But he submits in a cowardly way. His sensuality is awakened only amid too-heavy perfumes and in semidarkness. He spoils everything around him. Valdés Leal, full of his Cordova, a burning city where the Guadalquivir trails, over sand and rock, a few narrow streams of stagnant water, forgets the somber splendor of his visions in order to listen to him. For he is insinuating, sanctimonious, and sugary. His pictures are full of ambiguous shadows and of spurious light. He has certainly wandered around the city on the evenings of feast days at the hour most favorable for a glimpse, through the haze of the tapers and the censers, of the pink and yellow façades. He has often seen, in the nave of the cathedral all ruddy with



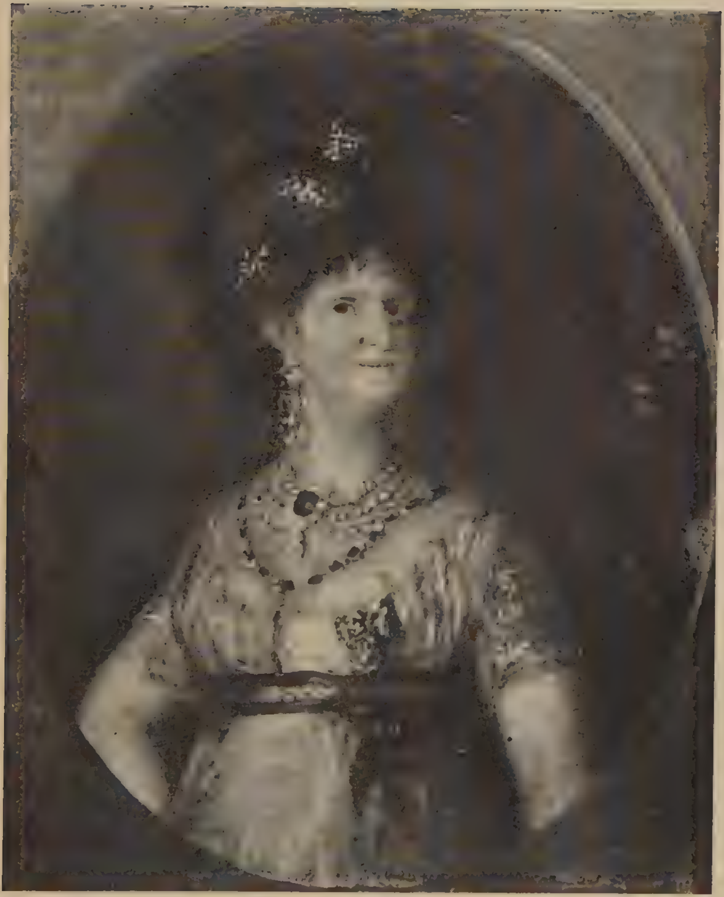
Goya. The Skaters, etching (*Private collection*).

lights, couples kissing on the lips, in the shadow of the pillars, at the moment when the Host is raised. The blood of the bulls has sent its smoke toward his nostrils, mingled with the odor of pepper and oil on black hair in which pinks have been entwined. But he has not felt the tragic joy and the distress of the monotonous rhythms of the dance of voluptuousness whose beat is followed interminably by the guitar and the clapping of hands. When a Christ on the Cross all smeared with blood is carried by, he has not heard, in the depth of his soul, how the song of a girl rises up, the sobbing, nasal plaint, infinite, arid, ardent, and sad as the desert.

He did not understand secret Spain. And when one knows the misery of Spain after his time, one cannot explain to oneself how the man who, in a half century of frenzied improvisations, sketched the most living physiognomy of that strange land, could come more than a hundred years afterward. Goya was from Aragon, to be sure, a province off the great routes and less exhausted, the place where the sculpture of the people had endured longest. But there was no crucible into which he could pour his lava. The house of Austria was dead from exhaustion; the Bourbons, emasculated and crushed by unhealthful devoutness, cloistered their secret vices in the alcove and the confessional. A bad German painter, Raphael Mengs, was their nearest representative for Velasquez. Spain was a lean beggar, draped from feet to chin in a patched old garment, worn and rusty. Why this sudden flame under the mask of carnival, this spark on the cold hearth? We always deceive ourselves about Spain. With a contemptuous decree, Napoleon annexes the sleepy thing. It sticks to him like a vampire, saws his tendons, drinks from his veins, and casts him off, drained of his blood, in a few months. That thing was not dead; it does not die. It has spasmodic crises which raise it up at a single bound, impose it upon the world, and send it back to sleep. It is like the Arab conquest. If the Inquisition and the gold of America explained the ruin of everything and the apparent death, they ought also to enable us to explain that savage vitality concealed by the indifference, the immobility, and the exterior fatalism. The Spaniards did not go to create gold in the Antilles or the Indies, to be sure, but to gather it up. Upon their return home they allowed tools to rust, undoubtedly, and the rock to take back to itself the earth which had been stripped of trees, and the mind to harden. And after that they stayed in their lair, cut off from Europe. They no longer saw the sea, the great civilizer; they no longer watched the departure and the arrival of the ships. But then, why this awakening? And why this sudden energy, why the terrible insurrection, Saragossa, and the sinister burst of laughter, and Goya's torrent of pearls and of flowers, if the Inquisition has broken down the entire strength here? When the desire to expand and to conquer commanded the heart of Spain, the Inquisition was an instrument of discipline and of combat. It is a corset of torture when this desire has disappeared; it grinds that contracted heart. It is in vain that Spain goes beyond her borders, she lives and goes to sleep at home; her military and lyric expansion is not an organism that can be controlled, but a spring which, after one release always comes back into place for another. If some external thing occurs to irritate her pride, she comes into possession of her power and of her soul for a century or for a day.

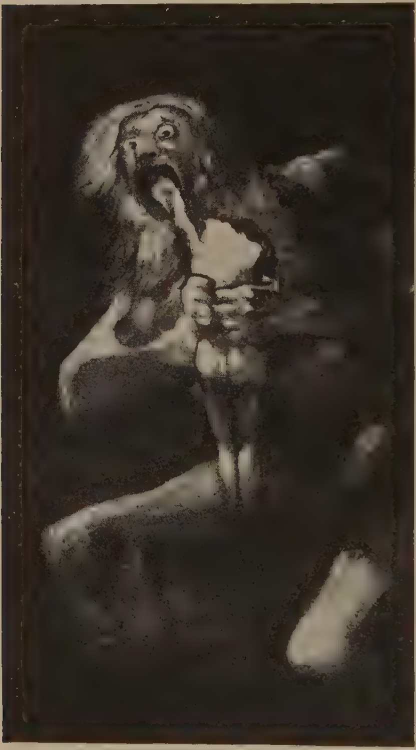
VI

With Goya, it was for a day, which is why he moves so quickly. One would say that the old Spain, that of the Holy Office, that of Don Quixote and the enchanted castles, that of Sancho and the unbounded earthy materiality, that of Arab magic, of the raucous and sad music, of the ingenuous cruelty, of the laughter at the gallows, and of the ardor for death, everywhere exhibiting itself or hiding itself, demanded that this man tell its story in haste, before the modern world should enter with the French. He gives us terrible approximations, horses and men ill formed, a species of tragic mannikins who live with a violent life, but which he has never time to refine and to set on a firm base. He interprets his rapid visions with whatever means come to him. His drawing staggers and stutters, but he never hesitates; with a single uncouth line he goes straight to his goal. It is a hasty edifice that he builds, with empty forms and with cloth puppets which he fills with his flame and his unbridled passion, as one stuffs a doll with bran. And yet the thing balances, an architecture is sketched, and also groups abruptly placed which a brief instinct for harmony distributes into blocks of shadow, brilliant lights, and subtle passages which leave in the memory no defined forms, but a persistent hallucination, a fluid whose lightning flashes everywhere and reveals life from within through the black hole of an eye, through a shoulder and an arm as they take aim, a stocking stretched upon the calf of a leg, a rumbling among the shadows, or a lake of silver whose gleam comes to the surface of the picture. Everything is approximate—the landscape, the gesture, the face, the costume. The intensity of the drama is increased thereby. For everything is drama, even a portrait. Now shadows appear, a nightmare coming from the depth of a people, its blood, its pride, its anger, its laughter, its vices, its voluptuousness, and its fervor, evoked in a mad whirl and hurled into the plane of life. Goya is a sorcerer who



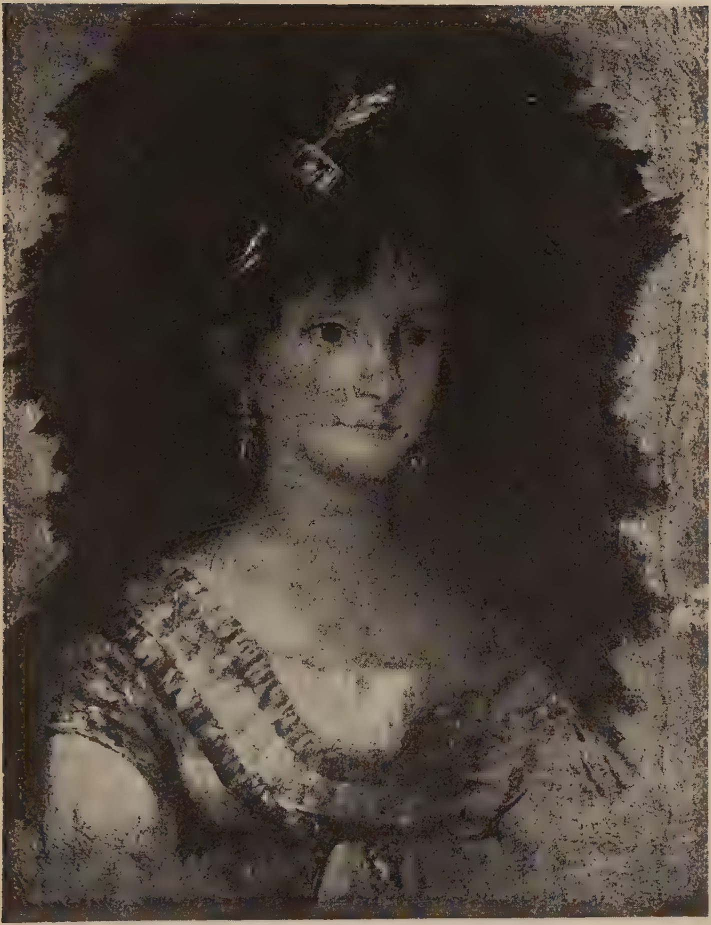
GOYA. Queen Maria Luisa (*Private collection*).

boils herbs and who surprises in the burning vapor the dark spirit of the soil where they grew.



Goya. Saturn (*Prado*).

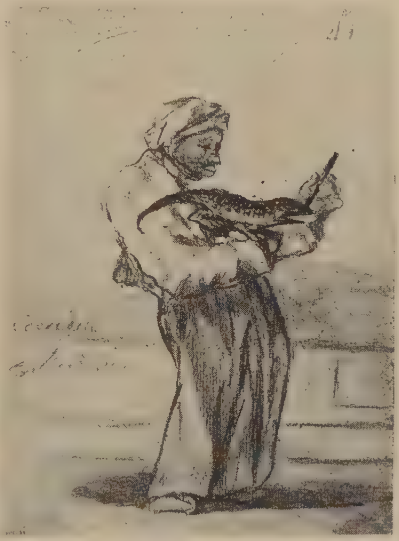
His most finished canvases resemble sketches snatched from space itself, like a great water color still drenched with water. The tremble of the muted harmonies which Velasquez had revealed to Spain becomes slighter and more uncertain. Everything trembles and glitters. The pink or gray silks, the blue or purple velvets, no longer merely suggest flowers hidden under the silver dew of orders, brooches, ribbons, and jewels scattered over the breasts and the hair, or around wrists or fingers. One would say that the inner skin of the oranges, the reflection of the flowers in pure water, and the very shadow cast by the rose of the infantas on crystal fountains were traversing the transparent and dancing air of torrid Spain, and quivering in the diamonds, and germinating as drops of fire in the rubies and the opals. The cloudiness of the pearl invades everything, penetrating the air and the



Goya. Portrait of an Infanta (*Private collection*).

bare skin, whose lusts are surrounded by it. The cloudiness of the pearl touches the beautiful arms of the women, the flowing arms, full as a living column, and swelling with sap and with blood. He finds the pearl once more in their gloves which reach above their shoulders, in their little satin shoes, their hair framing their powdered faces with a light nimbus, in the bodices pressed around their warm breasts, in skirts that draw around their bellies in an amorous caress, and in their laps bathed in shadow. He is the most intoxicating painter of carnal voluptuousness. He surrounds women with a kind of flaming aureole. They are all beautiful, even the ugly ones. The pearly glow on a shoulder, a moist mouth, gleaming teeth, or a downy and heavy arm suffices to fill him with fever. Their odor which he breathes, their breath which he drinks, wander in his very harmonies. He takes feverish possession of all the secrets of their flesh. The idea of violation haunts him, but he is held by their grace. He is bestial. But a kind of savage lyricism ennobles his bestiality.

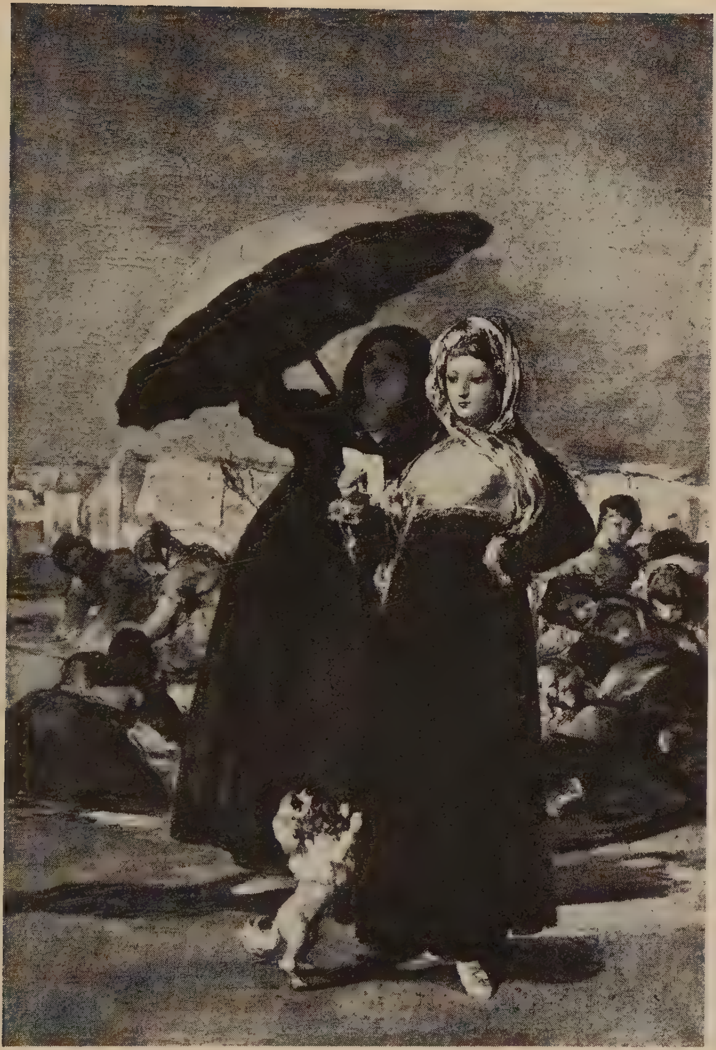
And beside, he knows the danger. He has seen them tossing a disjointed puppet in a blanket. He must have escaped from them after furious debauches, and cast them all on fire upon his canvas, injecting his fury into their eyes which are like dark, hot coals, and their mouths, in which the blood beats. When they are old, he has his revenge; he deepens the hollow behind their collar bones, scrapes their bones, dislocates their jaws, pulls out their hair and all their teeth, reddens their eyelids, and wrinkles and tarnishes their skin. He shows skeletons in décolleté, in a fluffy cloud of silks, with flowers, muslin, and jewels scattered in profusion. Their rank does not frighten him. Infantas or queens, they are hideous and sinister if he sees them so; and if he desires them, he tells it. Moreover, they consent. Everything consents in Spain, upon condition that the fire from within consume life to the end. Princes adopt as their painter the man who knows them best; they allow Titian, Velasquez, or Carreño to exhibit them to the public. It is pride which sets them apart, and then they abandon themselves, like other men, to the frightful realism which permits Spaniards to manufacture invalids, to torture and be tortured with an insouciance which is called cruelty by those who do not understand, to stuff back into the bellies of horses the entrails that were hanging out. Goya is the most implacable. The royal family of his country is a collection of monsters stupefied by the accumulation of physical defects, by the practices of bigotry, by furtive orgies, and by fear. His generals have faces like butchers. The model gives himself to the painter; a savage indifference to everything that is not brute passion and instinctive life provokes sudden encounters from which lightning flashes. When he has not a woman, or when she does not show her arms, her breasts, and her hips, everything is concentrated in the face, which seems a condensation of space seized in flight. The air quivers in all the flesh; the flesh quivers in the air through its inner radiance. It is as if he had sur-



GOYA. The Man with the Lizard (*Private collection*).

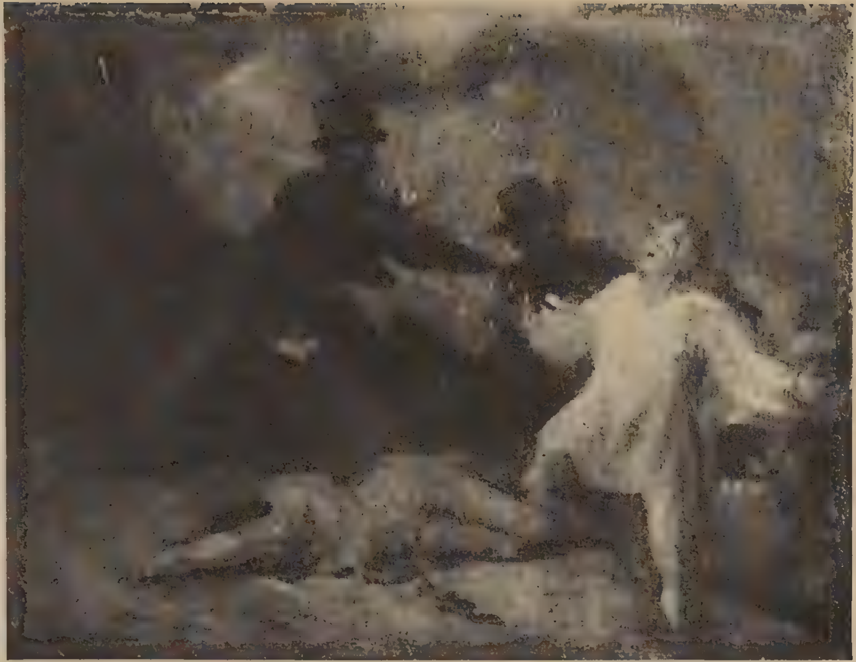
prised life itself. The eyes—the eyes of children especially—are dark holes opening upon thought undefined. Velasquez had seen that. With Goya, the mystery heightens—the form being that of an instant, a lightning impression, a rapid and profound moment, arrested in the flash of an eyelid, a burning shadow accumulating in the passing moment all there is of secret and spontaneous forces in a creative mind.

In Italy, where he passed several years of his youth, he had done hardly any copying, and indeed had rarely touched his brushes. He meditated much before the work of the initiators of painting, and enjoyed himself the remainder of the time. Save for Velasquez, who makes clear to him the true plastic sense of Spain, he knows no bonds of tradition, nothing but a frenzied thought at the heart of a world profoundly agitated by a passion so wild that it succeeds in fixing that world in its most clear-cut and most characteristic aspects. Before his fortieth year he will scarcely do more than begin to interpret the visions which since childhood he has been allowing to ripen through their burning contact with his vices, his anger, his hatred, his bravado, and his wild impulse toward love and toward liberty. And if echoes from afar run through him, as if veiled by the vibrant air and the dust—the melancholy and musical spirit of Watteau, the licentious grace of Greuze and of Fragonard, the sensual warmth of Prud'hon, something of Reynolds, something of Tiepolo—it is that, with a force the more tragic that he is so completely alone in the most compressed country in Europe, he represents a century everywhere determined to free life from the dogmas which stifle it, and from the aristocracies which are no longer worthy of directing it. He fights incessantly, against the monarchy that harbors him; against the Inquisition which does not understand him or does not dare to break his



Goya. The Young (*Lille*).

brush; against religion, which was too deeply sunk in the narrowness of the letter to grasp the heretical symbols flashing through it; against the French when they come to stave in with cannon shot that which he loves and that which he hates. Everything serves him as a pretext; his laughter and his fury pass into his state portraits as freely as into his terrible etchings where, at the depth of the blacks, one perceives the movement of vampires, sinister apparitions, gnomes, winged fœtuses, and undefined monsters, and where the whites bring forth gleams of a powerful grace—a breast, a woman's leg, or a pure arm gloved with gray. He bounds from one idea to another, striking here, caressing there; he loves, he violates, he crushes with masked irony when men think him submissive; he is filled with tenderness while he revolts; he does not always know what he means to do or to say and, in order not to falsify about that which he feels, he expresses it brusquely in jets of acid, no matter how, but with the spasmodic strength that comes of nerves laid bare and of passion that is stronger than fear. His brush, his pencil, and his etching point race to follow his thought. One thinks to follow it, and it escapes. Is he Watteau when he mingles with the merry-making of the people and surprises, under trees like those of a theater, muffled figures and spangled dresses, when he organizes games and round dances over which passes the sinister breath of something that will never be again? Is he Shakespeare when he follows witches to their nightly revels or sees crossing the depth of nocturnal skies membranous wings and bloody phantoms? Is he Rembrandt when, with a ray of light falling from no one knows where, he illuminates a hunted and furious monster with a human pack behind it? Is he Voltaire when he prostrates his crowds before a preaching parrot, or shows women kneeling at the feet of an



GOYA. The Massacre (*Private collection*).

ass or before a scarecrow covered with a monk's robe? Is he Hokusai when he sees, appearing in the enervated night, a face or a form in which the most discordant aspects of the beast combine with those of death? Is he Dante when the war comes, when there are piled up in carts the cadavers of the massacred, which the soldiers violate and impale, when one sees emerging from a frame the muzzle of the guns turned on a heap of screaming flesh, when ropes or hands strangle, when a lantern standing on the ground lights up executioners as they bend over, faces torn with bullets, black mouths, lifted arms, and blood and brains spattered about everywhere? He is Goya, a peasant of Spain, jester and sentencer, a ferocious street-boy, an irate philosopher, a visionary impossible to arrest in one form, something gay, evil, lecherous, and noble, at the same time or by turns. He goes through the carnival, amuses himself with hot-blooded women and boneless puppets. His cheeks are red, but his gayety is funereal. One does not know whether he laughs with the others or whether he laughs at them, or if, under their laughter, he catches a glimpse of the teeth of a fleshless skull. He goes to see the killing of the bulls, the garroting of the bandits, and the bleeding of the flagellants; he mounts on the barricades, lashes the prince, and is hail fellow with the blackguard. He decorates his house with frightful figures, people buried alive and fighting one another, cannibals gorged with human meat and waving bloody pieces of it. He goes into a rage against his epoch and partakes with passion of its cruelty, its gallantry, and its tainted romanticism. He is a free spirit, and he is a rustic. He is, of all the great Spaniards who were subtle and savage, the most savage, the most subtle. He is full of darkness, but the flame illuminates him. His indignation kindles like that of a saint, but he has the sadism of torture, and when he says, "I saw that," in describing limbs torn from bodies, decapitated trunks, and heads hanging from branches, he exhibits the soul of an executioner. It was with fury that he lived the life of his sinister and charming land, and of his century, carrying on together its conscious debauch and its instinctive heroism. Driven from Spain by the priests, he died in exile, amid the Frenchmen whom he loved for their spirit of revolution, and whose bloodiest enemy he had been. When his coffin was opened, two skeletons were found in it. . . .

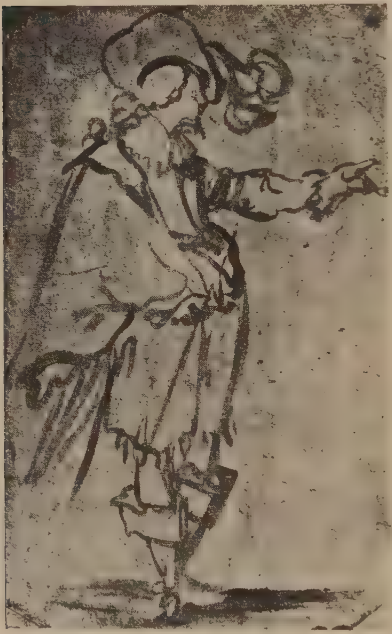
Versailles

Chapter IV. THE FRENCH MONARCHY AND THE AESTHETIC DOGMA

I

THE cavalier king, the favorite of prelates who capture strongholds and command squadrons, had no painter of his own. Van Dyck, a Fleming, by the way, and, at bottom, light and servile, dwelt in England, where he had united his fortunes with those of that other gentleman-king who lived ill and died well. On the other hand, Marie de' Medici appealed to Rubens to decorate the Italian palace which she had just built in Paris. Italian plastics and Spanish literature were entering everywhere; the French mind was undergoing one of those crises, so brief and so frequent in its history, when it asks the surrounding peoples for weapons, which it will sharpen, polish, shape, and adapt to its hand. It was taking its repose through war, wherein its artistic faculties were developing through action, the joy of wild fighting, soldierly elegance, battles as courteous as tournaments, trenches opened to the sound of violins, and duels to the death which were considered a game.

The only man of that epoch to understand its ardent force and its dry grace kept away from the scene and detested the performance which religion and politics imposed upon his actors. Jacques Callot, who sees the poor world pillaged, broken on the wheel, burned, and hanged, weeps over it, is indignant, and rages against the unhappiness of the time. Jacques Callot curses war, but he loves the soldier. With his lean veterans in threadbare cloaks, his pikemen in their top-boots, their rakish felt hats and battered plumes, one would say that it is with a point of a rapier that he engraves his copper. The trooper, the trooper before the days of the uniform, who belts in his empty belly with a golden baldric, and the muddy swaggerer of whom one sees no more, when he advances, than the cock spurs and the eagle face, are brothers to the cripple and the beggar with whom he has tramped the roads, and to the wandering comedians whom he has heard rehearsing, in barns, the rôles of Scaramouche, Fracasse, and Arlequin. In their company he has eaten his soup from the top of an old drum. He has boiled herbs in the kettle of fifteenth-century witches, and the story-tellers of the sixteenth have regaled him with their half-spoiled wine. He has accompanied Jerome Bosch and Breughel amid grinning skeletons, the monsters, and the bloated personages of the side-shows. He has discovered Rosinante, of the knight Don Quixote, harnessed to the cart of poor Romanies. He has followed the musketeers from the Hôtel de Troisville to the Hôtel de Rambouillet. This lean wolf is a proud man. Had he not lived, there would have been a gap in this century, despite Cyrano, despite Théophile and Scarron. We should hardly know its setting. We should not comprehend the fever of living that there was between the ferrule of Malherbe and the ax of Richelieu. The official painters knew nothing of their age. Simon Vouet is a phrasemaker. The good engraver Abraham Bosse is a Boileau who would attempt to correct Molière and to tame Tabarin. Jean Boullongne, whose taste for the dregs of life might have brought him close to the crowd, thinks himself obliged to reside in Rome, and to employ his verve in aping Caravaggio. Italy will return our artists to us only after having misled them.

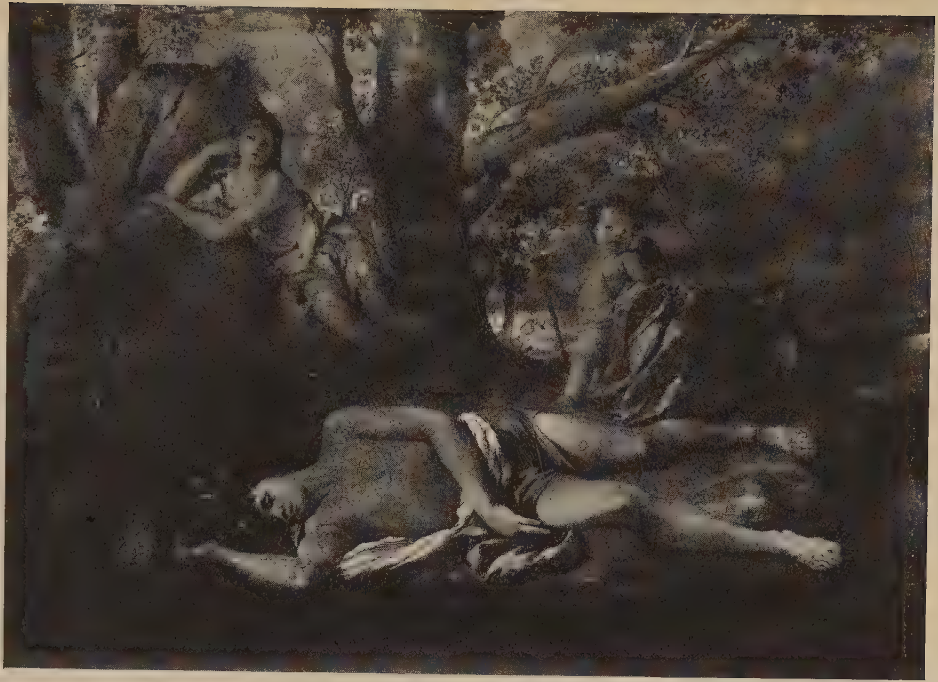


Callot. Drawing (*Uffizi*).

Indeed, they all go there, and any way they can go, on foot with bands of men picked up by chance, if there is no other way. Callot himself, when a mere child, goes there with some gypsies and stays there for twelve years. The other man of Lorraine, Claude Gelée, engages himself with a company of cooks in order to make the trip, and, having reached his goal, hires out as a domestic. Parrocel gets there only after having been a prisoner of the corsairs. Courtois leaves his native Burgundy at the age of fifteen to go off to Rome, live there, paint his romantic battles, and die there. The two brothers Mignard sojourn there for a long time, Nicolas for a third of his mature life. Sébastien Bourdon incurs the hostility of Claude by imitating his pictures there. Noël Coypel, who goes to direct the Academy there, brings with him his son Antoine, at the age of eleven. Duquesnoy of Brussels, Pierre Puget of Marseilles, Girardon, and the Coustous—all the sculptors of the century—go to take counsel from the shade of Michael Angelo, and lessons from the chevalier Bernini. Le Brun returns only after having for several years solicited the generous domination of Poussin, who will live there all his life in a little house on the Pincio, where, with Claude, he will represent the profound soul of France in exile under its own sky—René Descartes living in Holland or in Sweden, and Corneille being obliged to wrap himself in a Spanish cape in order that his passion might exert an influence there.

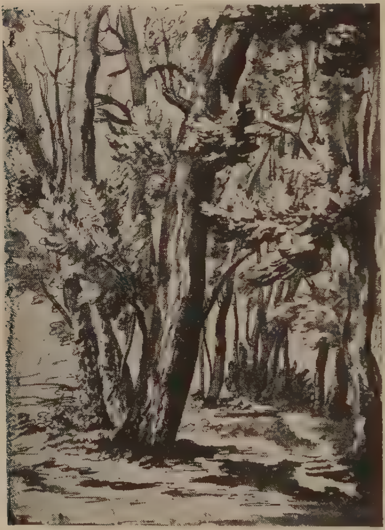
As the centralization of the monarchy had driven forth this soul from the woods and the river banks, as, with the disintegration of the art of stained glass, it had forgotten the profound fineness and the diffused illumination of its sky, and, with the progressive decline of its corporations of artists, the mysterious correspondence which unites the sculptured image with the inner fire of living, it seemed to be sending its two best painters upon the mission of once more learning from Italy the sense of light and of volume through which space and the form of the world shape our will. They had not, visibly, a great deal in common, neither in origin, nor in character, nor in culture. Poussin is a Norman, Claude is a Lorrain. The one is a great reader, the other hardly knows how to read, and writes his very name badly. The one is of a firmly ordered mind, meditative, a bit doctrinaire, tending to intellectual generalizations and plastic abstractions, pursuing in the universe the invisible plane which unrolled in his brain, always master of his vision, regular of face, that grave and strong face that is modeled like a monument. The other has ill-set features and a hunched figure, clumsy and heavy; he goes on from dawn to dusk as a beast goes to the drinking ford, and is kept above the level of labored work and of confused conception by a continuous lyric exaltation capable of carrying him, without apparent effort, across the threshold of the superior harmonies wherein intuition and intelligence are in close communion. But both were in love with rhythm and measure, at a period when the need for method and for style was everywhere reacting against the political and intellectual fermentation which had torn the sixteenth century from the organism of the Middle Ages; and both were determined to ask from Italy the discipline to which her masters, the first to free themselves from ancient servitudes, were tending irresistibly, amid the confusion of isolated researches and the antagonisms of passion.

It was they who were to gather together the secret teaching of Rome, so dangerous for those who are weak of will or of mind. Italy, debilitated by her effort, divided into twenty hostile camps, now sought in this teaching no more than a willing, hollow slavery, without hope of a compensating intimacy. Spain, exhausted by pride, refused to move. England was organizing her merchant class and the practical religion destined to enrich her. Germany, devastated, chopped to pieces, and emptied by a horrible war, no longer felt anything, no longer understood anything. France, who was rapidly mounting toward political unity through



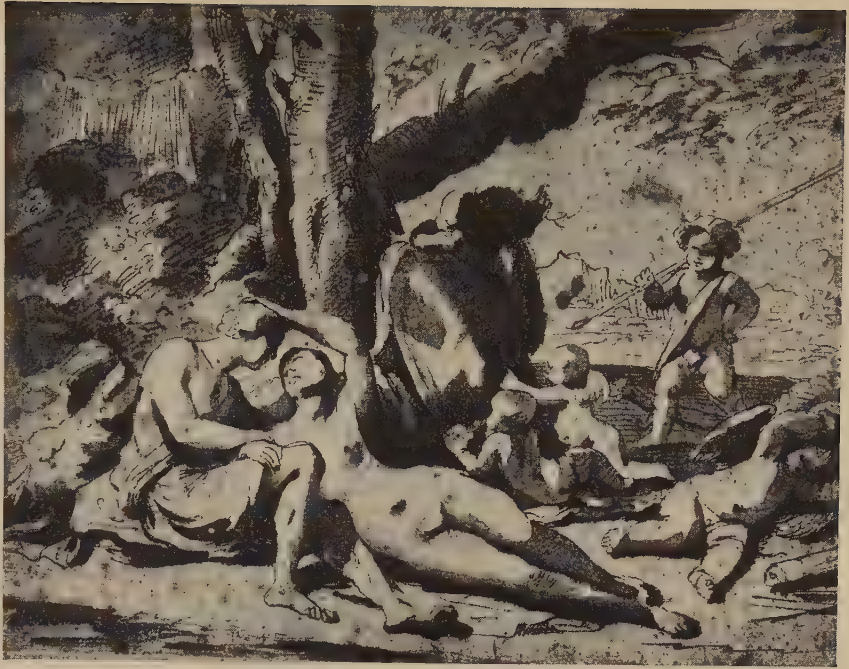
POUSSIN. Echo and Narcissus (*Louvre*).

which she would try to gain a substitute for her lost unity of soul, was the only one in Europe who could profit by the intellectualism offered by the Italians, and arrest the world, on its road to renewal, in the illusion of an hour. When, in the long-sustained studies of Claude and Poussin, one has followed their will to subject the tree and the water and the body and architecture to the same profound law of structural likeness, which the one divines and the other discovers in a universe patiently interrogated at all hours of the day, we hear arising by itself the regular and powerful echo of the alexandrine of Corneille, and the presentiment of the geometrical system which Descartes will formulate, and we catch a glimpse of the overwhelming shadow of the æsthetic and administrative edifice which Colbert and Louis XIV will build from top to bottom.


POUSSIN. The tall trees, drawing (*Louvre*).

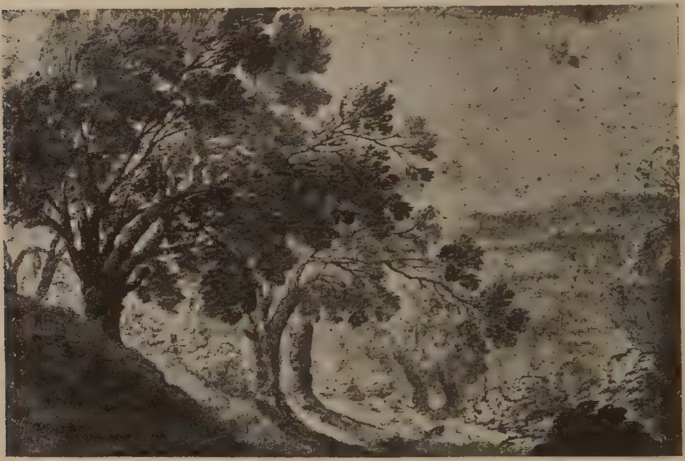
Only, the edifice is in process of building; it does not yet inclose them. Better even than in Poussin's drawings—among the finest in the world, but where the spontaneous force of emotion, of verve, and of life never dissimulate his sculptural research—one sees the character of the moment in Claude's drawings—lines of fire, burning spots, strangely shaped and powerful visions of the landscape before him, an intoxicating apparition, moist in its coolness, bursting with sap, bathed in air, in shadows, and in light, which he hurls on his sheet of white paper with his black ink. Their roots plunge to the richest and best-nourished loam of their soil. They form part of a strength that is growing, and not of a strength that is dying because of its desire to become fixed. The passionate search for a new equilibrium gives them nobility, and a flame which holds the work upright and causes it to pass beyond its frame, exalting the will and illuminating the heart. Amid the rotting virtuosity of the Italians, they preserve their calm, remounting to the great works and remaining faithful to the mission which France has intrusted to them. The problem is that of establishing the structure of the world wherein the French mind, which persists, will, with admirable ease, introduce into its retarded evolution the old southern rhythms renewed by Italy, and will play the rôle of conciliator and arbiter between the men of the north and the men of the south. It is necessary to give to the whole of Europe something which shall replace, in the body of the *élite*, the broken backbone of the dead Middle Ages. It is necessary to impose upon humanity, whose adventure has carried it out of its earlier paths, the harmonious order which shall permit it, for a century, to believe that it has found new paths, and, in any case, to prepare for their discovery. The dawn and the end of day, all that which gives to the universe its intensity of sentiment, illuminate, in the heart of a landscape redolent of the ancient world, a humanity determined upon seizing, amid the gleam of things, the magnificent appearances which sustain its hope.

Oh, lyricism of Claude Lorrain, you did not know what your rôle would be! You did not know what your bristling masts, your pennants, and your sails in the flaming sky would represent to us. You did not suspect the meaning assumed, in the minds of men who had reached the extreme limit of intellectual anarchy, by your straight-lined ray, sweeping along the scene to the foreground, lighting a brief flame on the crest of the hastening waves bringing to men the immense weight of the water, the salt wind, and the horizon of purple and of mist where the other face of the globe is gradually sinking. You knew nothing of that, you only felt; when your eye, ever raised toward the circular line of the Roman desert, fixed a central point of red and gold in the haze, whence luminous dust spread out in every direction, and into an ever more tenuous rain, you felt that banks of stone and a double row of palaces, churches, and ruins, were giving to the flight of your dream a regular form wherein it was perhaps acquiring more of persuasive power and of the strength that sweeps us with it. It is always the same — that dream; its power to stir us grows and swells from work to work as we observe so much innocence and so much incessant aspiration toward the glory of the daylight, and note its determination never to abandon those irreproachable avenues which lead to harmony, and which betray nothing of the evil life, the doubt, the struggle, and the suffering which they must, however, traverse. The standards are always flying from the peak of the towers, there is always the forest of the rigging, the oriflammes, and the foam caught by the light, the rippling expanse that flees in the reek of purple gold, and the molten sun which governs the swelling or dying symphony according to whether it rises or sets. Claude permits Filippo Lauri to people this world of glory, to garnish the peristyles and the staircases of his temples with crowds, not even perceiving them in the radiance of the sunlight which bathes everything in a translucent aërial mist whose fiery



POUSSIN. Mars and Venus, drawing (*Chantilly*).

center is merged with the center of his being. Claude dwells in the sun, he darts forth with its rays, and from the moment when it begins to set he never takes his eyes from the hills, the motionless tops of the trees, and the uncrowned capitals which it floods with somber gold, at the moment when it is about to die. This poor peasant lives in the heart of an impressive hour,



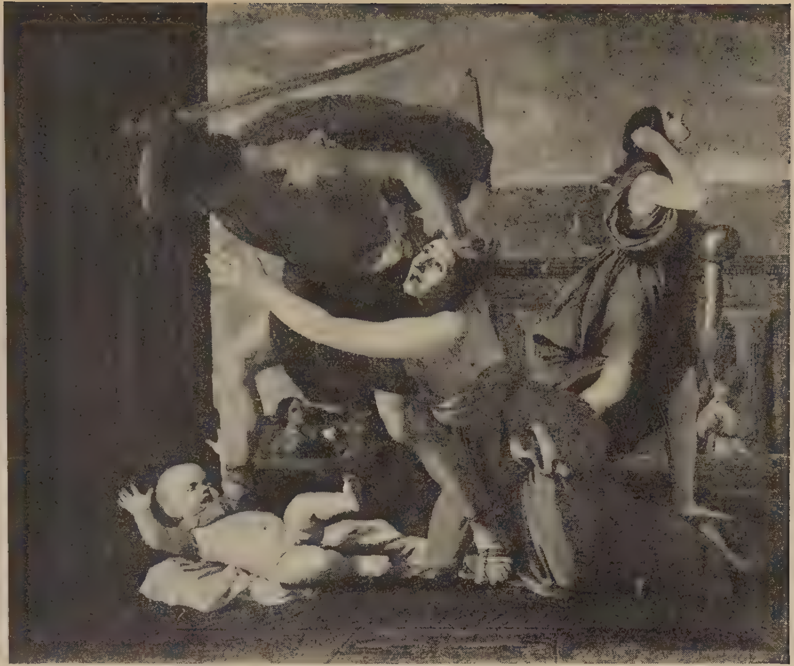
Poussin. Study of Evergreen Oaks (*Chantilly*).

which he does not hear sounding. The orb declines, the shadow, still flaming, extends over the ebullient youth of Occidental society, but it gilds a proud and regular fairyland of edifices and colonnades, a world of stone and of marble arising from the paved shores, toward which the ship of the spirit, believing itself at last and forever master of itself, approaches with majesty—black against the redness of the sky.

II

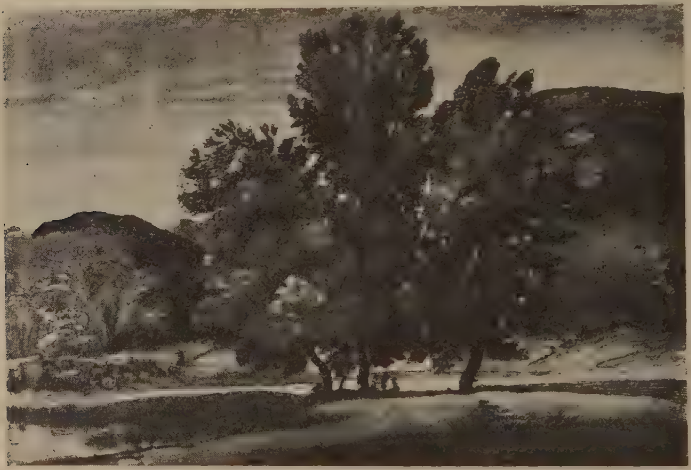
With Nicolas Poussin, the writing is of far greater power. Here is a man who knows where he is going, sometimes too well; he expounds and demonstrates with an eloquence in which his compatriot Corneille could have recognized his power of coining maxims, and of inclosing, in a uniform and vigorous rhythm, everything which, in life, is unprecise and fugitive, in order that he may impose upon it the form of his will. Heroic and lyric unity is the sole point of departure; everything groups and orders itself around that. The plastic unity is simply the result of an intellectual labor of conscious elimination, and of construction through the idea, wherein form and gesture, local tone, the general tonality, and the distribution of the volume and the arabesque respond to the central appeal of reason. And, when one has looked for a long time at his direct studies, their forms sculpturing the void like bas-reliefs wrought by light and shadow, when one knows that upon his return from excursions to the Campagna where the wrecked aqueducts, the circular edifices, the flat-topped pines, and the line of the pure hills impose clear-cut contours and decisive formulas upon the intelligence, "he brought back, in his handkerchief, pebbles, moss, flowers, and other things of the kind which he desired to paint exactly, from nature," one cannot do less than obey, as he did, that all-powerful appeal. "I have neglected nothing," he said to his friends. His character is as lofty as his faculty for comprehending, a faculty whose progression is the result of a desire to comprehend the universe, and which is ever ready to spiritualize its gains. Grapes, ripe fruits, bread, wheat, the golden russet of autumn, or the pure water of summer, or the springtime foliage which the wind silvers and sets trembling, are the sensuous center of his abstract symphony, whose grave coloration responds to a preoccupation with voluntary unity; and this gives but additional splendor to that recumbent body of a woman, to that lyre of gold shining upon a dark bosom, to that copper, fired by the fall of day, or to that laurel leaf, gleaming like a green bronze. As Homer compared the waist of a girl to the stem of a tree, he rediscovered the form of columns in the feminine torso. His constant and faithful penetration of the world filled him with moral harmonies as well ordered as a temple, and the tree and the round breasts and the arris of a monument or of a rock against the sky, entered the rhythm of the dancers to unite their curve with the resonance of music, and to purify them as a whole by their passage through the mind.

Whether he carries his lucid revery over the stormy landscape of the bacchanals, under the gray and black clouds and the deep azure and the thick foliage, or whether he leaned over the waters in order to surprise, in their motionless darkness, the silvered silhouette of the gods, never did antique myth and Italian ardor fail to appeal to French measure and definiteness, in order to express the nobility of his calm sentiment. The regular tiers made by the houses on the hills, the straight front of the colonnades, and the enormous round towers crowning the heights, all lead him to rediscover in the disposition of the trees, the mass of the earth's undulations, and even in the form of the sky laden with powerful clouds, that architectural sense of the world which is peculiar to the artists of his race and which they translate with the same sustained lyricism and the same firm intellect, from the Romanesque church and from the Gothic nave to the gardens of Le Nôtre, to the château of Mansard, to the music of Rameau, to the palaces of Gabriel, and to the poems of de Vigny. Everything contributes thereto and sub-

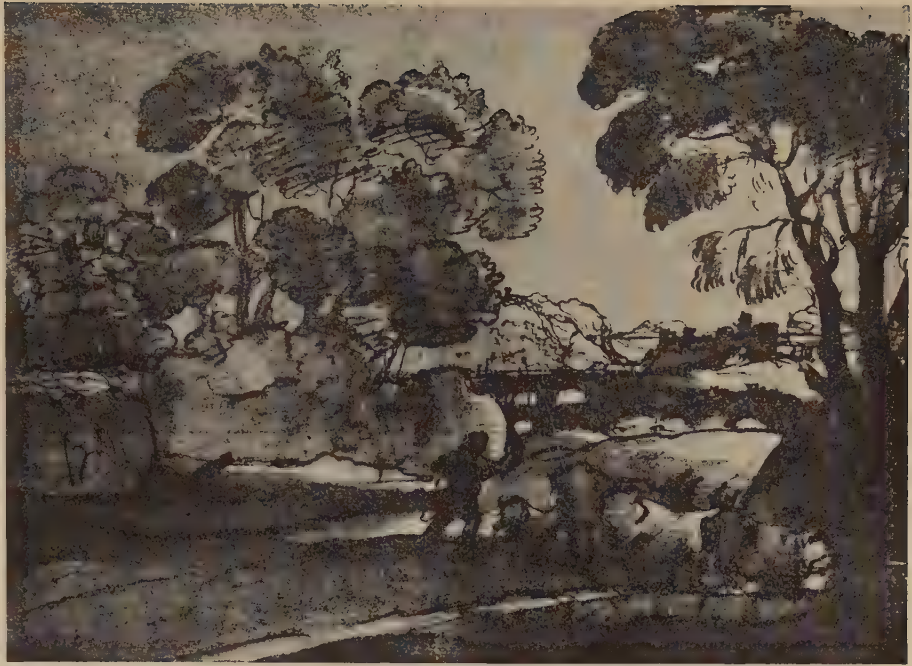


Poussin. The Massacre of the Innocents (*Chantilly*).

mits itself thereto. Human attitude and form are an admission that there is, in the elements of nature, a rigorous subordination which unites the movement of the heavenly bodies with the succession of the seasons and the beating of hearts. One finds this in the gesture of an arm plucking fruit from the branches, pouring wine into a cup, supporting a burden on an erect head, reaping wheat, leading a horse to the plowing, casting a line into the water (while turning halfway around to listen to a singer), bending a bow, shaking the thyrsus, or placing upon a brow a crown of oak. From that superb submission to the higher will which establishes the hierarchy of Nature in order to bring forth intelligence as her highest function, every function borrows an affecting purity. A yoke of galloping horses, an ox raising its head, a mute herd under the moon, the swelling udder of a goat to which a child is clinging, or the muzzle of a horse raised above the water are



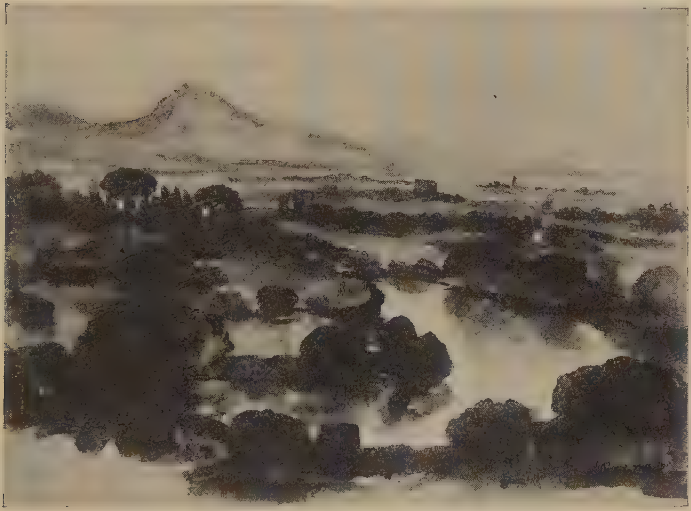
Claude Lorrain. Landscape, drawing (*Louvre*).



Claude Lorrain. Landscape, drawing (*Louvre*).

events that echo to the extreme limits of the waves of secret harmony which the contemplation of the universe causes to arise within us. The tree with the black trunk, which mounts as pure as the column of the temple, is a hymn of gratitude to the prodigious order of the world. The giant voice of the gods murmurs in it with the wind, and with the wings of the bees; and the gleam of the daylight on the silvered bark and on the edge of the trembling leaves is a glance of pride from the royal orb. The earth, space, love, the games of man and woman, the sacred submission of the beasts, all is sublime and all is innocent. Everything purifies itself and grows greater when one acquiesces in everything, thereby bringing it into contact with that which is highest and noblest within oneself, that which has the greatest faculty for giving admiration.

This great man, like all the great men of his century, is to be understood only upon close acquaintance. He frowns on one's approach, his tone is severe. The deep soul appears suddenly when one is almost ready to give up trying to seize it, the idyllic, amorous, and sensual soul of a being resolved to accept the poetry and the immorality of the world upon condition that he remain the master in tracing its sure courses and its accessible summits. In order not to love him when one has understood him, one must have failed to feel that in his purified heart is reborn the illusion of the singers of our distant dawn, whose desire perceived nude women passing under the branches, and mirages trembling in the water, when the labors and the games rhythmed by the course of the heavenly bodies gave to life the appearance of a sacred poem which everything on earth participated in ennobling. Pure arms open in space to invoke voluptuousness or to cradle sleep; round heads of children lie on the naked belly or on the warm shoulder of the mothers; heads crowned with flowers arise to look straight before them or to sink again on swelling breasts; walking, and kneeling, and the supplication of hands, the whole of the drama and of the eclogue, are inscribed on a superb scroll which passes across life like an indefatigable affirmation of gratitude and faith. Massacre as well as love is a pretext for glorifying form, whose calm splendor appears only to those who have penetrated the indifference of nature before massacre and love. Two profound memories haunt Poussin. He has seen performed, in the woods, where the shadow is burning, the orgiastic wedding of Titian and the universe. "The Fire in the Borgo" has revealed to him how sculptural limbs, spread wide by terror or made tense by prayer, can introduce among men a harmony superior to pity, because it creates hope. That was his starting point for the establishing of French tragedy and for joining the wild soul, the musi-



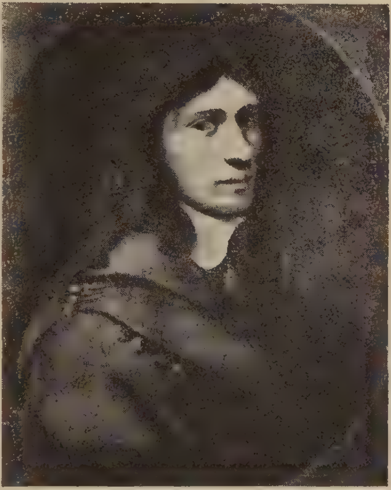
Claude Lorrain. Drawing (*Private collection*).

cal and trembling soul of Racine, by way of the order created by Corneille.

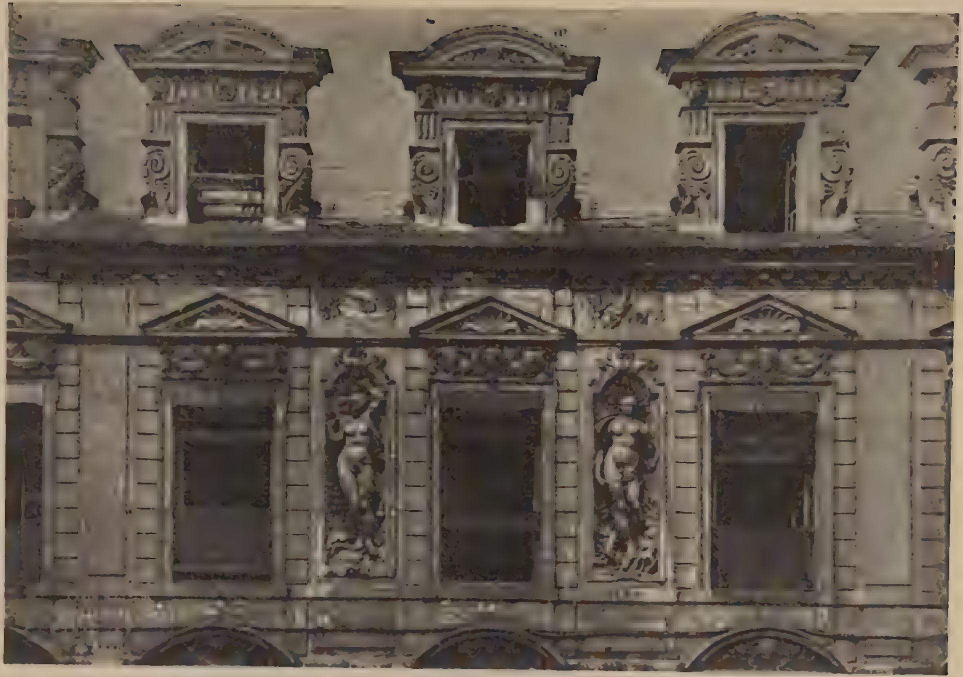
And that is not all. His track is deep. All Frenchmen, down through the strongest and most radiant century of their painting, will follow it passionately. Here is the rosy child, the Dionysiac child of Boucher and of Bouchardon. Here is the religious sentiment of woods and meadows, the nude forms and the branches reflected in sleeping waters, the harmony of the bacchanal and the eclogue with the architecture of the clouds and of the thickets, the heroic tree with outspread leaves, Watteau, Vernet, Ingres, Corot, Puvis de Chavannes, Cézanne. Here are the downy colors of the ripening fruits of France to which Watteau, Chardin, Corot, and sometimes Ingres, will come to get the temper of their harmonies. Here are the raised arms, the convulsed masks, the tragic cadavers, and the sensual and funereal drama which thunders around Delacroix.

III

The dead masters apart, and the honest Domenichino, whose heavy labor he respected, Nicolas Poussin, who felt nothing but disdain for the honors with which people sought to embarrass him and who remained only two years in Paris, although he was lodged in the Louvre as first painter to the king—Nicolas Poussin despised the various manufacturers of sculpture and painting who surrounded him. When he had arrived in Rome, at the approach of his thirtieth year, they had elected with enthusiasm, as prince of the Academy of St. Luke, that Simon Vouet who later was to scheme to force Poussin to flee the court and thus reserve the pickings for himself. Which indicates the state in which he found painting there. The School was triumphing there in its narrowest and emptiest form. The French painter knew hardly anything about the School. But the spoils of the heroes are the habitual food of the parasites of the mind. Le Brun had received in Rome the counsels of the master whose example was later to be monopolized by the Academy in Paris, to the point of still calling him, after his death, "M. le Poussin." The religion of the School was being established. Its dogma was passing from Italy into France, after having been filtered and decanted by the bigoted missionaries sent by Colbert to Rome. Nothing remained but to adapt it to the imperious needs of the French monarchy which, for half a century, would attempt to impose upon France a unity of action and thought which was perhaps necessary, but from which she nearly died.


S. Bourdon. Portrait of the Artist
(*Ecole des Beaux-Arts*)

To establish itself in France, to organize itself, and to conquer there, the dogma found, indeed, an intellectual atmosphere which was particularly propitious. The Cartesian method impregnated all minds. What, then, after all, was all this return to nature through generalizations which were considered to have produced ancient art, if not the "reduction to the universal" to which the whole system of Descartes was tending? Did not Malebranche see in the irregularities of nature the punishment of sinners? And did not Jansenist rigors represent an attempt to conduct the moral law toward the same absolute ends? The writers, and the best ones, precisely, affirm the superiority of the "ancients" over the "moderns." Tragedy subjects the exposition of psychological conflicts and even their unrolling, to inflexible rules. Mathematics—whose edifice will be crowned by Newton's law, regulating the order of the heavens—penetrates literature to the point of bringing Fontenelle, toward the end of the century, to set up "the geometrical spirit" as the basis of all action. Bossuet, hauled about in every direction by his need for controversy, always saves himself by invoking the necessity of keeping the Church immutable, and by placing dogma outside of all discussion. The true, the beautiful, and the good begin to be confused one with another. In short, in the freest natures, Molière, La Bruyère, La Fontaine even, something is appearing of the Cartesian rigor, in the architecture of speech, the precision of contours, and the clearness of avenues. And when the state, in the name of unity, tracks down Protestantism and Jansenism, it is itself penetrated by their logical thought and their thirst for demonstrating. The king is in no wise different from the men of his period. They recognize the period and they recognize themselves in him, which is what gives him such ascendency over the others and over himself. The irreducible alexandrine of Molière, of Racine, and Despréaux, the symmetrical battles of van der Meulen, the ritualized etiquette of his court, and the inflexible administrative organism on which his power rests, establish around his mind a network of precise images and of forms rendered hierarchical. The only profound drama of the century, the anguish of Pascal, is nothing else than a perpetual struggle between an immense aspiration toward love and the limits wherein it is inclosed by the rationalist

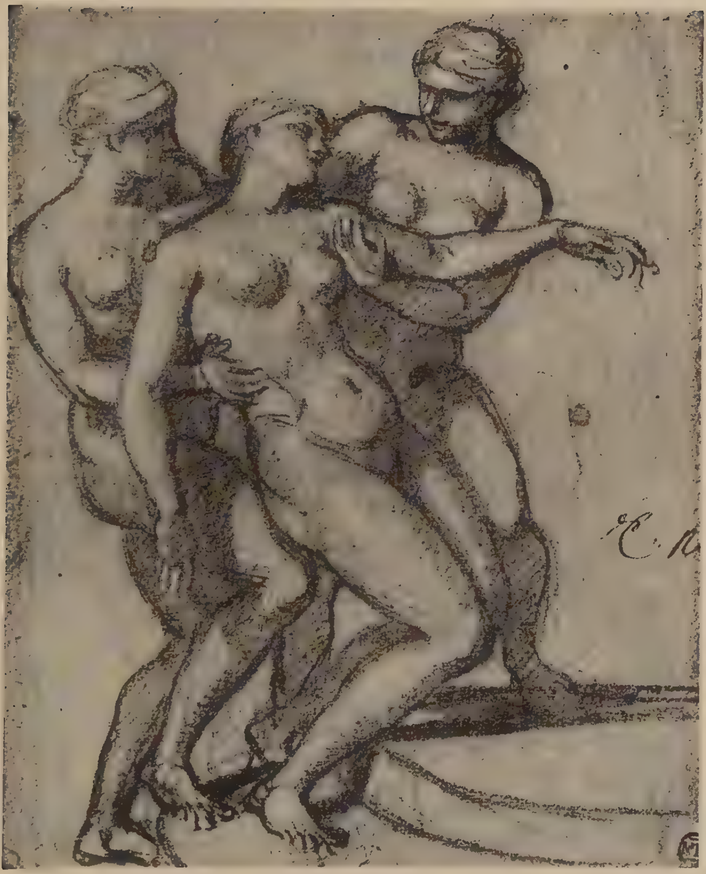


Hotel Sully, Paris, Windows and Dormer Windows.

method which his geometer's mind was forced to adopt.

A man astoundingly organized for the task holds all the threads of the system, which he renders more complete and more rigid each day, and more logically deduced from the premises which command it. Everything holds together in it; a broken thread may, and should, compromise the whole. Colbert institutes powerful bodies which will be able, by themselves, to build bridges and cut roads on an invariable model, in order to regularize the diffused life of the country. He sees nothing but the straight line. River is joined to river or helped out in its unequal and sinuous course by paved canals which cross the hills, going by the shortest route. He protects the forests, in order to

The Basin of Apollo at Versailles.



Le Brun. Group of Women (*Louvre*).

direct the regular cuttings of the timber there, which shall go off to the maritime arsenals, and so furnish the wood necessary for the construction of ships, whose tonnage and form he determines, and which he launches on an exact date, inscribing in lists, pitiless in their exactitude, the men who will man them. For he must force the springs, so that nothing shall be in excess; he must make use of the public treasury, and the chain and the whip to compel life to fit into such precise frames. He gives to soldiers their uniforms. He rigorously organizes the protection of industries. He opens manufactories in order to incorporate with the state all the trades that he can seize upon. He subjects to his control those whom he cannot deliver to the king. He struggles against everything which combats or balances the autocracy: the parliaments, the governments of the provinces, municipal rights, the synods, and soon religion, which refuses to return to universal and national Catholicism. He hates the press, he hates the book—all that which can introduce a rift into his system—or a wheel which he has not carefully tested. He concentrates, in Paris, collections and casts, volumes, manuscripts, medals, vases, statues, and pictures. He administers the Fine Arts with as much method as the Department of Roads and Bridges, or that of Finance, or of the Navy. He extends his protectorate to literature and plastics, institutes pensions for the artists who consent to obey, organizes and centralizes the Academies, and creates other ones for the bodies that as yet had none—the archæologists, the musicians, and the architects. He makes a state institution of the journey to Rome by founding a School there, admission to which will be determined every year by a formal examination, and which shall be an æsthetic convent, with obligatory mass, fixed hours for rising and retiring, and inflexible surveillance over the elected inmates. That is not enough; we must go back to Byzantium to find a precedent. It is prohibited to open free studios in France; he reserves to the Academy of painting and sculpture a monopoly in teaching. . . . One day, he will have a member of that academy banished for five years for a pamphlet which the artist was suspected of having written against Le Brun.

Art, which Colbert wished to protect, is thus menaced, and tracked to its living sources. It does not as a whole, however, die of this; something of its profound disquietude survives, a general idea which all the adherents of the system are engaged in propping up everywhere for fifty years. It was the invincible need of the century itself which placed above the Italian School, evolving according to hollow formulas in decadent surroundings, the French æsthetic dogma, an outgrowth of the concrete and living foundation of the race, and pursuing the systematization of art to the point of travesty, at the same time that science, philosophy, theology, and society as a whole, under the shadow of the centralizing monarchy, pursue the moral and material unity of the nation. The irreducible Gallicanism of the king and of the clergy of France is a manifestation of that same desire, assuring to the French soul, after all, the right to express itself. Italian doctrine is only a frame into which it is necessary to fit in the whole mass of the great general effort, willingly or by force. The prejudice of the noble subject, the subordination of the accidentals of color to motionless form, the hierarchy of the styles, and the strict obedience to the proportions of the antique, all must, however, pass through the clarity of French reason in order that it may adapt to its needs abstractions too distant and absolutes too isolated. The education of the will, slowly given by Descartes and Corneille to minds full of knowledge, and to energies well ordered, imposes, even so, upon the ensemble of the edifice, an imposing character. The economics of Colbert, the art of Le Brun and Le Nôtre, the military science of Turenne, the exegesis of Bossuet, the architecture of Hardouin-Mansard, the criticism of Boileau, the comedy, the tragedy, the verse, and the prose are all laid like an homage at the feet of a king made for his time, modeled by it, and convinced that he directs it. And when all this results, despite numberless insufficiencies of detail, in setting on foot a system which holds everywhere, the system borrows from its unity a strong intellectual life. Unity, after all, is one of life's essential characteristics. In this case, to be sure, it is from without that it is gained, from a theoretical point of departure and by means of artificial processes. . . . It manages, however, to raise an edifice which all minds,

The Pont-Royal, Paris (1685).

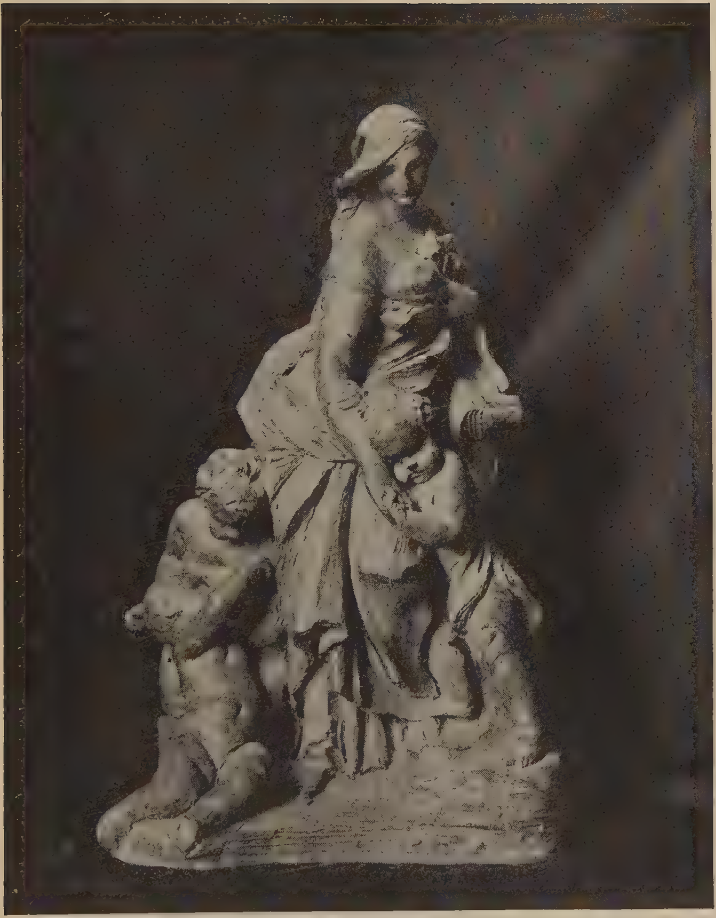
momentarily uniform, have labored to build. Catholicism employs its habitual method. It monopolized the spirit of the commune, and the Renaissance bears its stamp. It will rationalize itself to combat the tendencies of that period by making itself master of the weapons forged by the Renaissance in its fever and its torment. All will crumble; but what a work! The artist, the poet, the soldier, the writer, the priest, the artisan, the clerk, and the noble — each one traces his straight course to the same central point where all meet and where the king unites all the reconciled dogmas in his solitary majesty.

Hardouin-Mansard. The Place Vendôme.

IV

He is surrounded in it by hierarchic gardens graded, from terrace to terrace, as they rise around circular or rectangular basins and lines of decorative baskets, marked by rows of trees cut by straight avenues, and forming an architecture of forests and of fountains wherein the thickets and the spouting water take on regular forms to oblige the world to recognize the order at the summit of which he stands. Everything mounts toward the king, the monumental staircases, the statues of bronze and of marble, themselves occupying, in the distribution of the jets of water and of the cascades, a rigorous hierarchy, and offering their docile material to commands from above. The liquid masses and the trimmed walls of the foliage make vaults, cradles, crowns, and avenues; their solemn hymn lifts up and hovers with a great cold murmur, from the well-raked gravel and from the close-cut grass, to the long, austere façades which align the superimposed windows in three rows. The copper and pewter figures in the sheets of water send the faintest of dull reflections to the clear-cut curtains of boxwood and yew which, with black strokes, unite the russet masses of autumn vegetation with the dark branches of the summer. It is a fragment of the universe stylized like a temple. Garlands of metal and garlands of leaves stretch from tree to tree and from column to column, forming, among the pierced walls of marble and of verdure, theaters where the violins mingle their plaint with the sound of the water. The ballet, ordered like a rite, unrolls its figures of animated geometry to the sounds of a music whose symmetrical grace has the nudity, frail and firm, of the circular colonnades from which the paths radiate. In the evening, fireworks prolong into the darkness the play of the straight lines and of the perfect curves, in order to demonstrate to the mind that the order of life has not changed its direction.

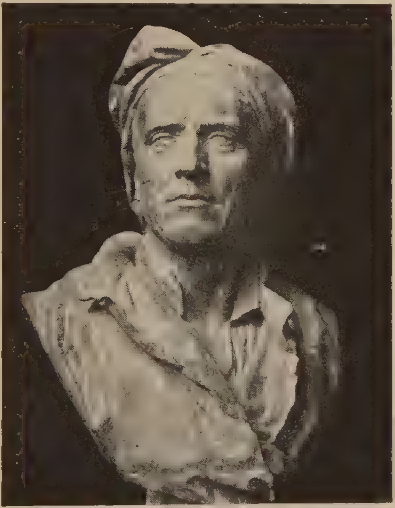
All around Paris, in a radiating crown whose elements are connected by imposing avenues and, here



Pierre Puget. Maternity, terra-cotta (*Aix*).

and there, at a greater distance, scattered in the environs of the large cities, the art of the gardens makes of France also, in the general misery of a soil that is scarcely cultivated, a vast system of aristocratic oases wherein the Cartesian order, the Catholic order, the monarchical order, and the æsthetic order express themselves in solidarity and with a rigor well relieved by space, by shining waters, and by verdure, in which appear the luminous notes of statues, railings, and staircases. After all, with the open spaces, regular, square, or polygonal, of Hardouin-Mansard, surrounded by mansions of moderate height, which are related by their bodies, their two wings, their pediments, and their great windows, with the straight street and the road, it is the representative art of this century of will and reason. Everything in it is geometrical, the abstract line, the vast ordered space leading to another space by a corridor bordered by the colonnade of the trees, and the broad roads and clearings, all permitting us to maintain order in the confusion offered by the senses to the brain. The square, the garden, the street, the bridge, and the road are lines drawn by the intelligence between the accidents of terrestrial nature and the mystery of habitations and of forests. The road especially, whose two sections are joined by the bridge—the august bridge, in which the two finest elements of building, the vault and the wall, are fused—the road bordered by the strength, the coolness, the silence, and the regular majesty of the trees, the road covering the earth with its network, and espousing its curves the better to dominate it, the road, a horizontal architecture, is one of the noblest forms of the peoples' faith in themselves. It is a challenge to death, for it is to survive those who trace it and who harden it with stone. It confronts man with man in the marches of war and in the exchanges of peace. It embraces, like arms, the cities which it cradles and presses upon the bosom of the soil. Like arms, it is laden with branches, with sheaves, and with vines. It offers bouquets of parks, of villas, and of gardens. It has the candor of obedience, the firmness of logic, the rectitude of mathematics.

And yet, if the mind desires resolutely to place itself face to face with all this order, which was already being sketched under Henri IV and Richelieu, and which goes on like a straight-lined boulevard, cutting through the confusion of wars, popular revolts, and political disorders, from the Place Royale to the Place Vendôme, something embarrasses it in its admiration and restrains it from loving. It cannot really abandon itself to the abstract intoxication of comprehending, except before the military walls, set up with mathematical rigor by Vauban, to withstand cannonades and assaults. Here, at last, adaptation gains its majesty. The star of stone, of earth, and of water girdles the outer city, crowns the island of granite, and terminates the acropolis, like a thought issuing from them in order to justify them. Reason protects life; there is no question, as in other places, of life being barred in by reason. Form does not consent to

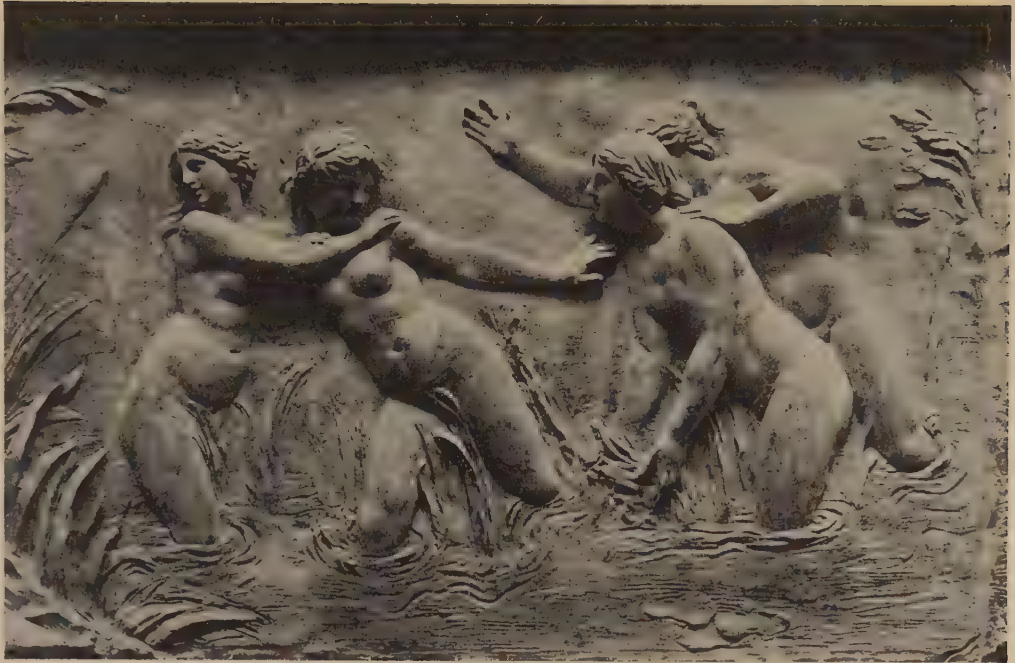


Coustou. Nicolas Coustou (*Versailles*).

subordinate its functions to pure intelligence save when they together express some profound organism growing within the crowds like a bud on a branch. In the French cathedral, the statue, the stained-glass window, and the carved foliage caused the mass to blossom; the spirit came from the depth. Here the spirit comes from without; it is no longer more than a parasite. The extreme abundance of allegory is the first thing to proclaim the propensity toward general ideas of an epoch incapable of discovering them in the forms and of completely expressing them through the means offered by the forms. At Versailles, everything is built abstractly; not a detail issues from a spontaneous volition or from the needs of sensibility. The decorator is not free to play his rôle as he understands it, within the limits set by the direction of the work and by the genius of his chief. The chief, who himself obeys dogmatic and political considerations foreign to the purpose of art, intervenes in every detail to obtain the submission of the artist in everything. And if the ensemble preserves the order of a theorem, it cannot pretend to the abstract limpidity of the theorem, since it works on the plane of life, and therefore breathes a dull sadness. It is a manuscript written in a fair handwriting into which no one has emptied his heart.

V

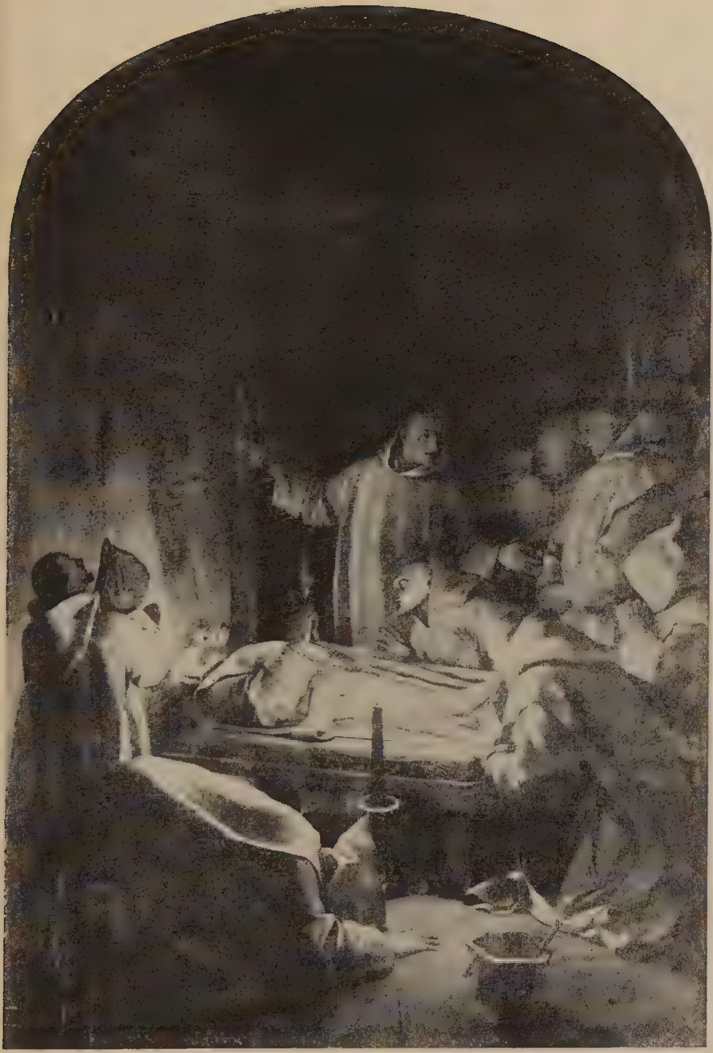
The bas-relief of Girardon, into which passes something of the sensual and melodious passion which conceived "Andromaque" and "Phèdre," is in exile in the gardens of the king. As it is of the robust lineage of Jean Goujon and of Ronsard, it would be at home under the branches, if its beautiful nude women disporting among the reeds did not have the effect of a free irruption of life in the too perfectly clipped alleys



GIRARDON. The Bath of the Nymphs (*Versailles*).

which mount toward the too-severe façades and the cold vestibules. Trembling water, undulating grace. . . . It is, perhaps, in the twilight of Versailles where the harmonies of autumn were calling, each year, for the coming of Watteau, the first great divine breath. But it stands alone. With Poussin dead—who, moreover, had lived but little in France—the plastics of the century will have neither its Molière, nor its La Fontaine, nor its Pascal above all, nor even its Bossuet. On the other hand, it will have its Boileau. We need not be astonished at this. The strongest power has only an uncertain influence upon the dawning and the progression of the great personalities of literature, whose work bears within itself its origin and its goal. If it can, in hours of political anarchy and of intellectual disorder, allow the great personalities of plastics to grow like the others, in hours of exaggerated centralization and unification it drives into canals and hems in the development of the arts whose fundamental function is to build and to decorate. The system of the century, which already very strongly reacted upon the writers and the poets, had to bring the painters and the sculptors into almost complete subjection to its law. The great men did not find their place in it. The mediocre men gained through it.

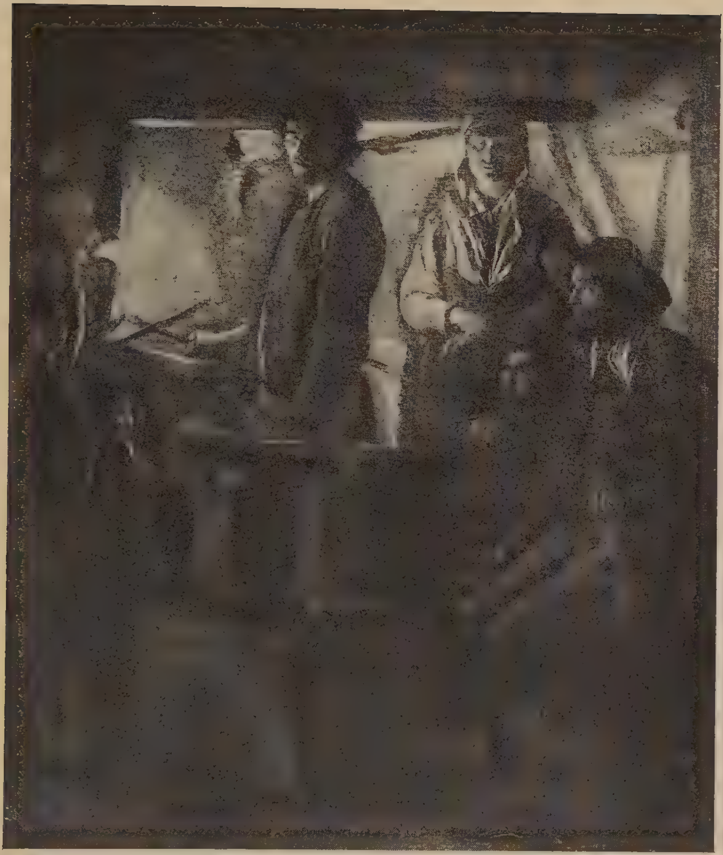
We see Pierre Puget wandering, like one accursed, from Toulon to Genoa, from Genoa to Marseilles, from Marseilles to Paris, where he is condemned to repress his soul and abase himself constantly, in order, despite his revolts, to obey the common rule; and despite his disgust, he must submit to the school formulas which his visible anguish tortures and falsifies everywhere. He is not even at his ease amid convicts; he stifles. He begins things, and abandons them. He tries to model the whole of Marseilles like an object. His desire is to draw vessels, build them, and decorate



LE SUEUR. The Death of Saint Bruno (*Louvre*).

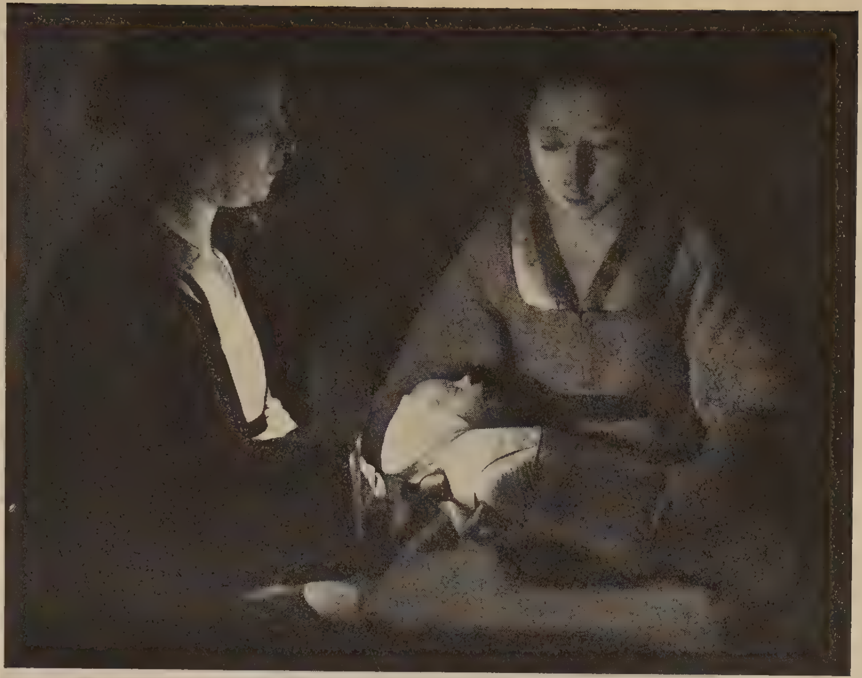
them. He conceives galleys and three-decked ships where the cannons coming from the portholes act, as do the masts and the sails and the oriflammes and the grandiloquent sculptures at the stern, as decorative elements. With his tridents, his sirens, his Amphitrites, and his Neptunes, he struggles on in the seaports, among the clerks and the engineers. He fails in all his projects. "The marble trembles before him, . . ." but he is determined not to take account of this trembling of the marble in order to impose upon it, in spite of itself, the swollen rhetoric of the century, to waste his time, and to scatter his pride in every trade. As a civil and naval architect, a painter, a sculptor in stone and in wood, he works himself out of breath to gain a spiritual domain which he could have assured to himself by a patient and passionate penetration to the depth of a single one of these forms of thought. A few powerfully sketched works are all that give up the secret of the greatness he felt in himself, but upon which he imposes a frame which stifles it and convulses it at every point. The spirit of Michael Angelo wears itself out by trying to lock up its flame in the grimaces of Bernini.

In this he is the opposite of Le Brun, who is devoid of passion, and works without disquietude and at his ease, and who governs the whole of art. He has no other reason for existence. Fed on Descartes, an æsthetician, an historian, an archæologist, and, into the bargain, a well-taught painter, he exercises, in the name of Colbert, a kind of viceroyalty over what is called from that moment on the "Beaux-Arts," and represents, in France, the Doctrine which he knows how to adapt in its entirety to the functions demanded of it by the deified monarchy, in order to attain the material and philosophic conquest desired by the French mind. Not more than a few isolated men resist: Mignard



THE BROTHERS LE NAIN. The Forge (*Louvre*).

follows only half-heartedly; Philippe de Champagne, a Fleming, moreover, and but little attracted by the School, cuts himself off in his jealous Jansenism. Le Sueur lives apart, knows almost nothing of Rome, never having made the journey, and, in this century, communes with the spirit of Fénelon through his mellifluous grace, the measured, decorous, and discreet appearance which he gives to French mysticism, and through his sweetish suavity, which falls like a rain of fine ashes on his pale blues and his grays. All the others obey: Mansard, the Coustous, Coyzevox, Girardon himself, and Louis XIV first of all, who thinks that he is commanding. The royal manufactories and the academies are under the orders of the first painter of the king. Le Nôtre furnishes him with the frame that he needs. When he takes part in the work, he can certainly do portraits as robust as those of Sébastien Bourdon and Claude Lefebvre—good painters—or of Coyzevox and the Coustous, good statue makers, and of all those solid workmen who painted well and sculptured well, as men wrote well, and built well, as men spoke and conversed well, as they preached well, as they commanded the armies and the squadrons well, and fought well in their century. But that is too slight a task. He needs immense surfaces in order to spread out his learned and flat painting; he seeks in the battles and the history of Alexander a necessary frame for the bombastic odes which his position and his faith command him to address to Louis XIV. And if his plan includes some room to be decorated, he rises to an effort as superb and as empty as the pompous eloquence to be expected of the artist who solves everything and directs everything. . . . Here are long vaulted halls of gold where ornaments in relief make a rich frame for red and somber paintings, cut-glass chandeliers, waxed floors, and tapestries: the reliquary is ready for the

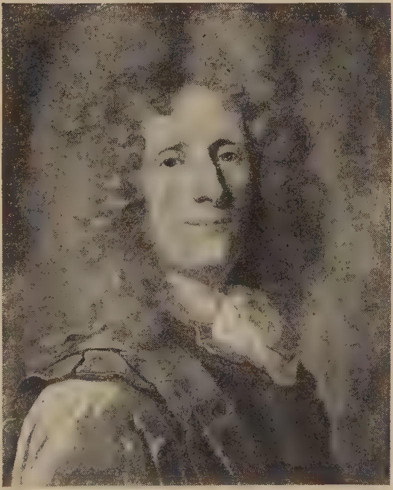


The Brothers Le Nain. The new-born baby (*Rennes*).

god. . . . Hyacinthe Rigaud, an acute psychologist, certainly, will be able to embalm him alive in his glory, not a hieratic glory, to be sure, for he has never stepped outside of his century and his society, and he justifies them and summarizes them in their solemn unity; Hyacinthe Rigaud will find all the elements in readiness for his dithyramb. The face, the hand, and the foot will be given a purely monarchical significance. His whole science is employed in painting outspread brocades, mantles of velvet and ermine, and the insignia of nobility. Fingers are never posed on anything but scepters, globes, and crowns; high heels point the tips of the toes at an angle, and flowing wigs deploy the whole of this magnificent stateliness around foreheads, eyes, and lips. Life has fled the depth of souls, and silence reigns in France, as if the aristocratic sentiments of its *élite* were scandalized by the surrounding tumult, which the death of Rubens, of Velasquez, and of Rembrandt has not yet quieted, and which German music will soon animate once more.

In reality, the period here expresses, with Poussin himself, and with Jean Goujon before Poussin, the fatigue of an extremely intelligent people which is trying by all possible means to conceal its fatigue, and which gives to the forms which it uses for that purpose a majestic exterior and a systematic development which create the illusion sought. It attempts to arrest individual research, which the following century and the Revolution will unchain anew. Instead of seeking a new organism through the individual, it imposes upon the individual a unity issuing from above. France pays—royally—for the glory of having been the first, after the Crusades, to set in motion the movement of the Occident. The stylization of the mind, which she had been seeking since the introduction in her land of Italian idealism, was only an attempt to arrest life in formulas, an attempt destined to be very rapidly checked, but participating, even so, in the qualities of harmony, of clarity, and of measure which remained, despite all, the privilege of the soil.

And so we have before us merely a façade, like those great colonnaded walls which mask uncomfortable apartments, like those imposing manners which ill conceal coarse and dirty habits, like that splendid display of wealth and force which did not prevent La Bruyère from evoking in terrible terms the misery of the peasants, nor the brothers Le Nain, above all, from recounting, in their little pictures which were not shown at Versailles, the story of the black bread earned by ragged men, with broken hands and bare feet, pictures which told how much majesty is given by exhausting and joyless work to weary attitudes, to clasped knees, to arms dropped in abandon, to eyes staring into emptiness, and to the profound play of light in poor dwellings. A great work, three-fourths of which is lost, a work of primitive power despite its learned structure, it sometimes makes us think of the grave statues of Egypt by its grand humility; an isolated work, and yet classic and of its century, through its form, but isolated in sentiment. When



H. Rigaud. Portrait (*Louvre*).

Louis XIV grows old, when his family crumbles, when everyone can see that he is mortal like the others, and that, after all, it is very fatiguing to keep a mask on for a lifetime, the lizards are allowed to run in the monument, the gilding and the stucco are allowed to peel off, and the wind, sweeping the dead leaves and the dust of flowers, is allowed to whirl in the cold rooms.

Coyzevox. Nymph with a shell (*Versailles*).

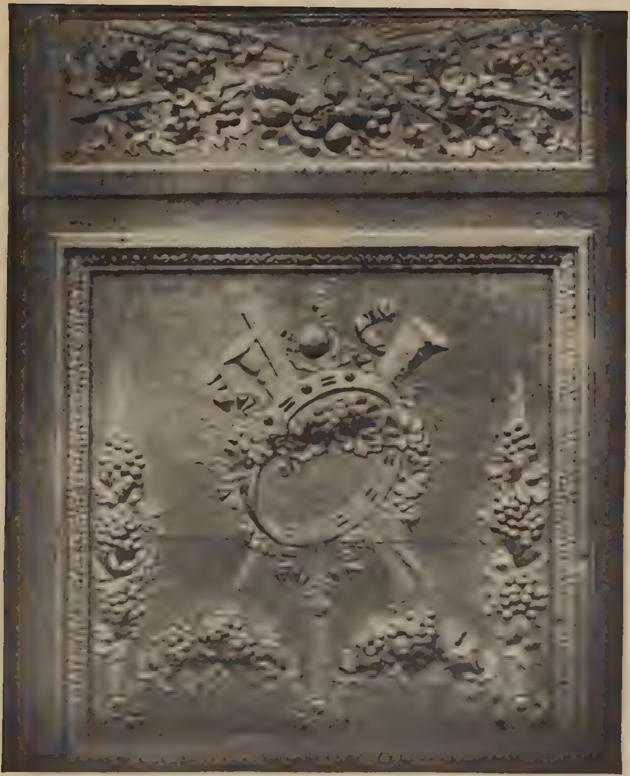
If he still stands erect, it is because the Jesuits have been summoned to prop him up. But everything is cracking—ecclesiastical discipline, industrial power, the navy, the army, pride—and respect. Ruin is everywhere, and persecution, and want. Colbert's system, carried to the bureaucratism which causes the greatest sterility, brings on a tariff war, the paralysis of commerce, and the most extreme anæmia of the arts. The king has no more money. Let a fissure occur in an ensemble so superb, and everything slips through it. . . . Louis XIV, his great style, and the dogma, one and multiform, which he represents, will spread, for a century, over Europe, over poor Germany, respectful of so much splendor, over wild Russia, decadent Italy, and drowsing Spain, while France, through one of those sudden recoveries, one of those changes of front with which she starts up again at the moment when she is sliding to the abyss, goes off in another direction with a careless gesture and irony on her lips and in her eyes. The disintegration which, from the beginning of the powerful masquerade, had been announcing itself tragically, with Pascal, affirms itself ferociously with Bayle, who no longer believes in anything whatsoever. Saint-Simon scrapes the oozing bones, and pours vitriol and vinegar on the wounds that will not close. . . . Mignard, though very old, reacts against Le Brun as soon as he becomes his successor. Rome is now without attraction; Rigaud dispenses with her, Jouvenet does not go there, nor does Largillière. Coyzevox has already something of the free and nervous look of Houdon. The painters of the north return to fashion. Largillière, who has studied Rubens at Antwerp and several times made the journey to London to gather up the trace of Van Dyck there, seeks to emancipate himself, to loosen his hand, to bring air into his harmonies. A breath of romance and of the pastoral lifts the curls of the wigs, and carries the eyes toward the heavens. . . . The soul of Watteau sometimes circles through the alleys at evening, mingling with the laughter that is returning, with the tears that are released, and with a sad and tender something which makes the hearts tremble. . . .

THE PETIT TRIANON

Chapter V. THE RATIONALIST PASSION

I

THE sun which rose from the depth of Lorrain's canvases, amid their severe architecture, was Watteau. An autumn sun, lighting up russet foliage. A profound sigh of nature, delivered from a corset of iron, and at the same time dying from having been so long compressed, and giving herself up to the desires of the poet with the concentrated and fiery heat of a flame which is burning out. In reality, they are still there, the severe architectures; the fête of the Regency installs itself in the great palaces; Saint-Simon and Montesquieu, iconoclasts, both belong, by birth and by activity, to the castes which guarded and cared for the icons; and the teaching of the school, until the end of the century and



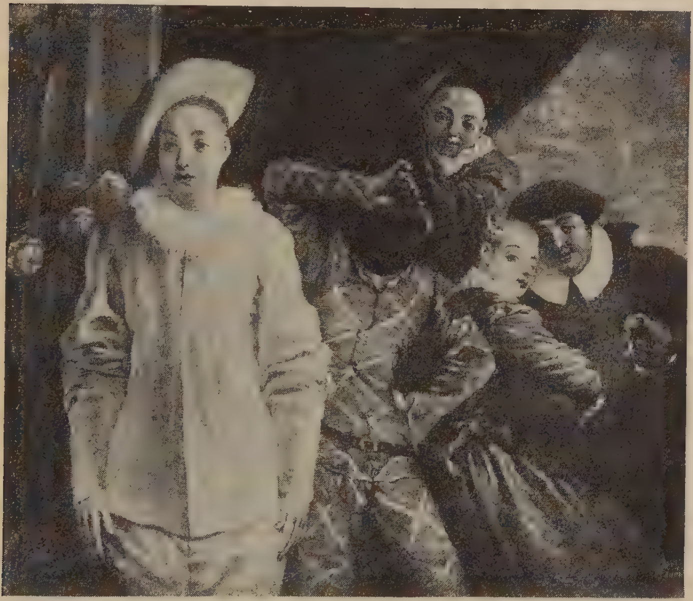
A Panel, style of Louis XVI.

beyond it, will reign officially. Its aspects are controlled by the mind. When Poussin gave order to his ideas and his images, he could not purge his flesh of the memory of the forms and the nymphs whom Jean Goujon and Ronsard encountered in the woods. When Watteau came forth from the alleys to explore these woods, full of forms and of shadow, the will of Poussin and the harmony of Racine penetrated there with him.

He arrived, with the freedom of the senses and with a thirst for mystery, in a world which had swept mystery from all its avenues and had forbidden the senses to go beyond the limits of reason. He accepted the exterior of this world, so as to keep intact his whole strength and his melancholy, and overturn their spiritual intimacy in order to send blood coursing through the marble of the statues, bathe the trees of the gardens with mist and light, and wring ardor and tears from the costumed personages who, for fifty years, had been crossing the stage, refusing to lend to it their dissimulated passion, and to borrow its well-schooled tremors. He still wears the wig, but he will have no more to do with pensions and offices. Instead, his lot is wretched poverty, a life of wandering, consumption, and the tenacious presentiment of death. That was enough to make him seek the shelter of the leaves, listen to music as it circled round, and surprise, in words overheard by chance and fleeting forms, the illusion of love and the flight of the hours.

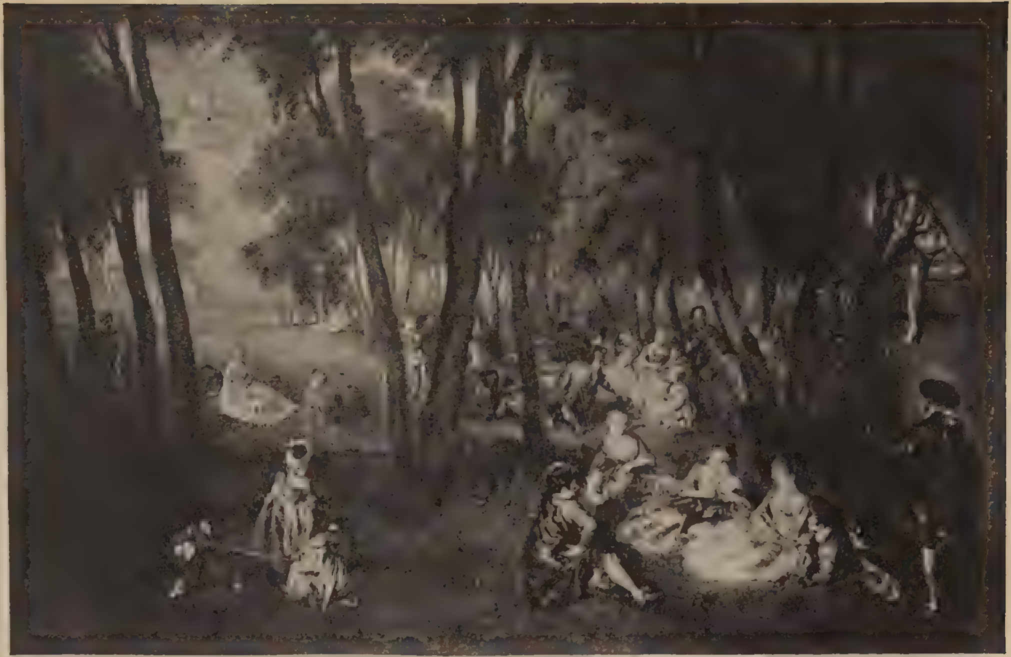
What a mystery is a great artist! Whether Watteau wished it or not, his sentimental comedy in the eternity of nature is the image of existence of us all, seen by an ardent nature across his bitter destiny. Here is the confronting, without respite and with admirable love, of life, too short, and of the infinite desired. Trembling soul, adoring soul—the burned-out pinks and the pale blues quiver like his poor soul. He feels that he is going to die. Between two flutters of an eyelid which mark the awakening of consciousness and the repose which comes too soon, he expresses the happy appearances and the poignant realities of the adventure to which he is condemned.

The resigned pessimism of the Italian farce, the cruel reality which prowls through the masquerade and masks itself with black velvet, came at their destined hour to afford distraction to a dying aristocracy and to the profound man who hides this death struggle under flowers. The whole century will feel it, Tiepolo, Cimarosa, Guardi, and Longhi will reply, later on, to Watteau, from the center of the fête; and from Spain herself, somber, ruined, and seeming almost dead, comes



Watteau. The Italian Comedy (*Private collection*).

the bantering laugh of Goya. But with Watteau, it is the prelude, intimate, delicate, drunk with tenderness, wildly desirous of making the illusion endure. He listens to the wind. He wanders and chats with the comedians. Like them he embroiders upon any canvas. Never did subject have less importance in itself. It is always the same, like the relationship of man and woman with love and with death. Since that is so, how monotonous! The groups posed on the moss, like leaves torn dying from the trees, or like ephemeral butterflies, will be carried away by the breeze which hurries them on to the abyss, with the forgetfulness and the phantoms, the plaint of the violoncellos, the sigh of the flutes, the perfumes, and the sound from the jets of water. When one isolates from its frame the talk of all these charming creatures, dressed in satin, powdered, rouged, having nothing in life to do but make love and music, everything expresses the joy of the instant seized on the wing. Here is nothing but prattle, rockets, and cascades of laughter, and an intricate cross-fire of gallantries and confessions. The round dance turns, the innocent games are organized and, when the concert begins, the flute and the mandolin scarcely cause voices to be lowered. Why does the ensemble give that sensation so near to sadness? The spirit of the poet is present. Slow steps and swayings, scattered words, necks that turn aside to seize a phrase of gallantry, throats bending to escape or to offer themselves, inclined and laughing faces resembling flowers only half open, all will pass, all will pass! How quickly a society appears and disappears under the trees a hundred years old, which, themselves, will die one day! Nothing is eternal but the sky, from which the clouds will disappear. The costumed comedy reveals a terrible ennui with life; it is only the song of the sonorous instruments which can cradle the despair of those who have nothing to do but

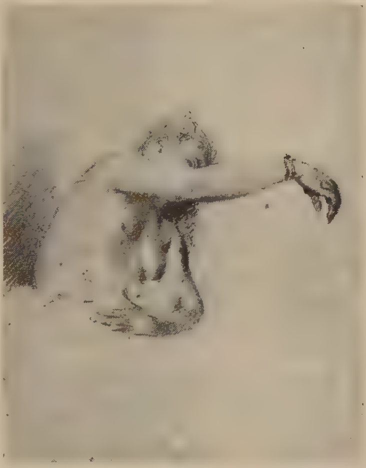


WATTEAU. Fête Champêtre (*Dresden*).

amuse themselves. Not one of us will arrest the impalpable instant when love transfixed him, and he who comes to tell of it with tones which penetrate one another and lines which continue one another, still burns with a desire that he will never satisfy.

To tell all this, he had therefore placed that which is most fugitive amid that which is most durable among the things seen by our eyes—space and the great woods. He died at Nogent, under the fog and the trees, quite near the water. He had brought back from his Flemish country, and from a visit he had made to England, the love of moist landscapes where the colors, in the multiplied prism of the tiny suspended drops, take on their real depth and their splendor. Music and trees, the whole of him is in them. The sonorous wave, rising from tense strings, itself belongs to the life of the air, with the light vapor which sets its azure haze around the scattered branches, the slender trunks which space themselves or assemble in clusters near the edge of the deep forests, and the luminous glades away toward the distance and the sky. The sound does not interrupt the silence, but rather increases it. Barely, if at all, a whispered echo reaches us from it. We do indeed see the fingers wandering upon the strings; the laughter and the phrases exchanged are to be guessed from busts leaning over or thrown back, and from fans that tap on hands—the actors in the charming drama are at a distance from their painter, and scattered to the depth of the clearings which flee toward the horizon, whose blue grows deeper, little by little. And the genius of painting resolves into visual harmonies the sound of the instruments which hovers above the murmurs of the voices. The green, the red, or the orange of the costumes of comedy or of parade, and the dark and silky spots made by the groups of people conversing, are mingled with the diffused silver which trembles and unites the tips of the near-by leaves with the sunny spaces which stretch away among the dark trunks.

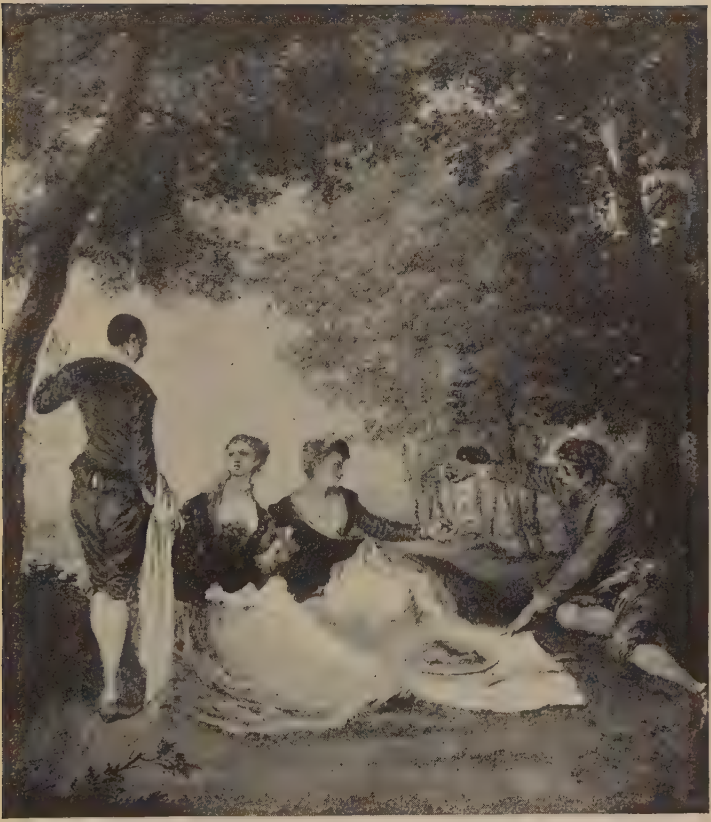
One suspects that he remained chaste, among these assemblies of lovers whom he sees only from afar. One guesses it from his statues of nude women, from his nude women themselves, from his groups of actresses and prattling ladies of high birth who have no other concern than love and talk of love. His ardent adoration of them always keeps him at a distance. He fears to hurt them, to penetrate their mystery, to know them from too near by, to tear the aërial veil which trembles between them and him. He caresses them only with his wandering harmonies, stolen here and there—as would some bee from the north, living in the damp forests, or under the lights of the fête—with the powdered gold of the hair, with the rose of the bodices, with blued and milky haze, with the flowered moss on which rest skirts and mantles of satin, with the nocturnal phosphorescence given to jewels and velvets by the gleam of the moon and of waving torches. It is the irised air which models the marble, which quivers when it touches breasts or necks, and which carries the same poignant agitation to the sprightly faces, to the fingers picking at the guitars, and to the delicate, pure legs under the stockings of transparent silk. But he never approaches; he is steeped in the breath of



Watteau. Drawing (*Louvre*).

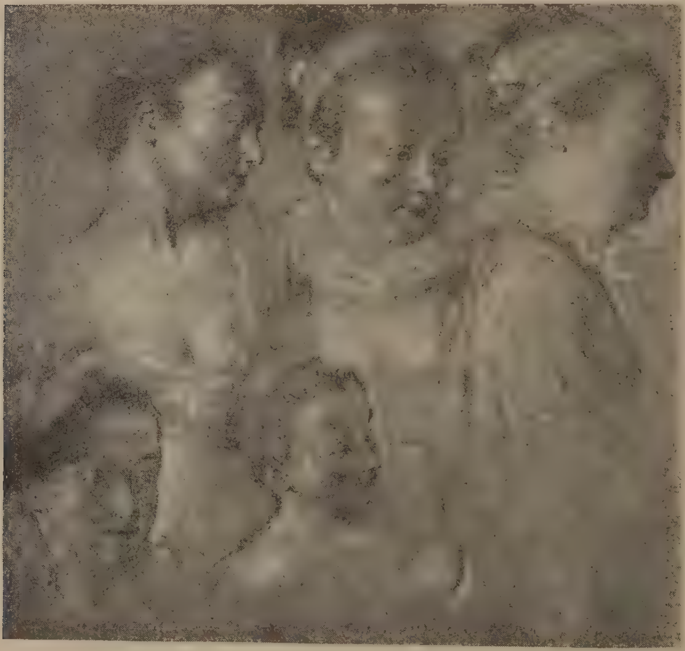
nature, and its ardor consumes him, but the vision of nature which issues from him is as distant as an old dream. Observe it in its detail. The vast structure of the forms, solid, turning, and substantial, makes them appear to be on the plane of man; he builds his little personages as great as his desire; he paints with the breadth, the fire, and the freedom of Veronese, of Rubens, of Velasquez, or of Rembrandt. Move away from the picture. The harmony moves away also; man and the woods are no more than a passionate memory for this being who dies of phthisis, alone in his room, embittered, in pain, hating every one who approaches him, but loving from afar everything he has seen along his path, forgiving all for the pettiness of their minds because of the power of their instincts, and because of the splendor of the earth, peopled with leaves and waters.

This man who had sent forth over the world swarms of Amors to scatter roses through the azured mist that is touched with gold, who had seized in flight, from perfumes and from smiles, all that is subtlest and most secret in the confessions of low voices, and stolen all the transparent stones of rings and necklaces, to mingle them with the blood of the skin and the light of the eyes, had remained immersed through all his senses in the earthiest of existences. One divines in him the wandering poet of the street who spends an hour watching boxes nailed up, amuses himself at shop entrances with the coming and going of buyers, or, covered with mud, goes on to the near-by storehouse, to see a nag unharnessed there, soup being prepared, and straw being unloaded from carts, or a troop of soldiers, dripping with mud and water. The nature he paints is by no means "opera scenery." From the roots of the tree to the clouds in the sky, it trembles with the life which runs through it. No one had ever breathed with such intoxication the strong odor of the damp woods,

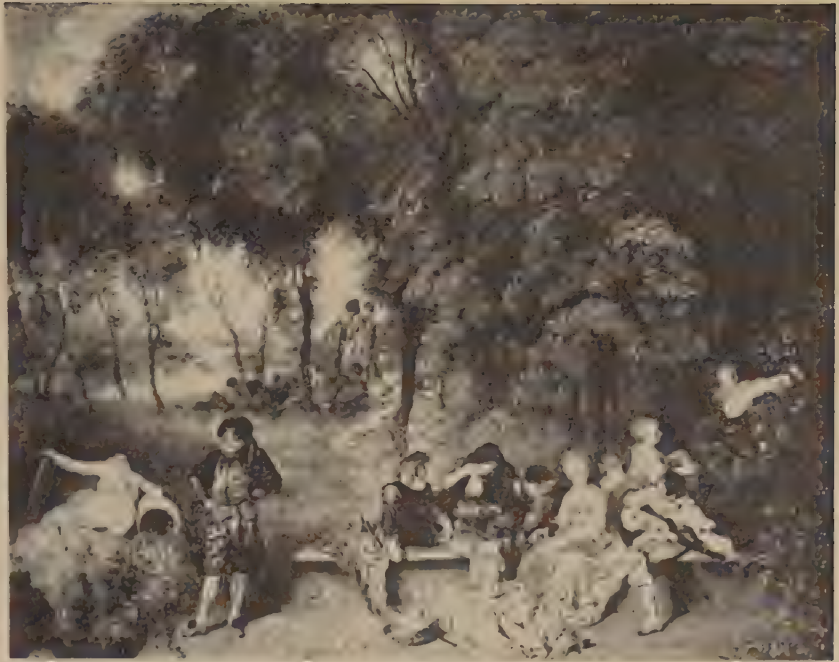


Watteau. The Luncheon (*Berlin*).

listened with so much surprise to the murmur of words in the silence of the great trees, or discovered with so much enchantment the gay spots formed by lovers, and people chatting among the dark trunks, and under the green shadow of the leaves. The "opera scenery" is only a pretext calculated to bring about the acceptance of the man who comes to break it down. In reality, he reacts against everything which, at the time when he came into the world, brought about the success of the preachers, the style of the artists, and the fortune of the shopmen. The muzzled aristocracy which, in the preceding century, had consented to discipline its original roughness,



WATTEAU. Drawing (*Louvre*).



WATTEAU. Rustic pleasures (*Wallace collection, London*).

in order to give to the state that façade, straight and bare, behind which politics and thought expressed their desire to imprison the soul of France, had matured rapidly in luxury, intrigue, and the exercises of the mind. Feeling itself about to die, it unchained its instincts. And immediately, at the instant when it was about to reach the height of an expansion of grace and of intelligence on the other slope of which its decline was forecast, it found, to represent it, a great artist who preferred to die in a charity hospital rather than live with it, but who found it adorable from afar. The clear vision of La Rochefoucauld, the pain of Pascal, and the bitterness of Molière excused in it two centuries of hypocrisy and of baseness for the sake of that second when a man of their race breathed its purest fragrance. And Montaigne recognized the aptitude of France to unite, in the same artistic expression, the most intimate despair and the loftiest elegance of the mind.

II

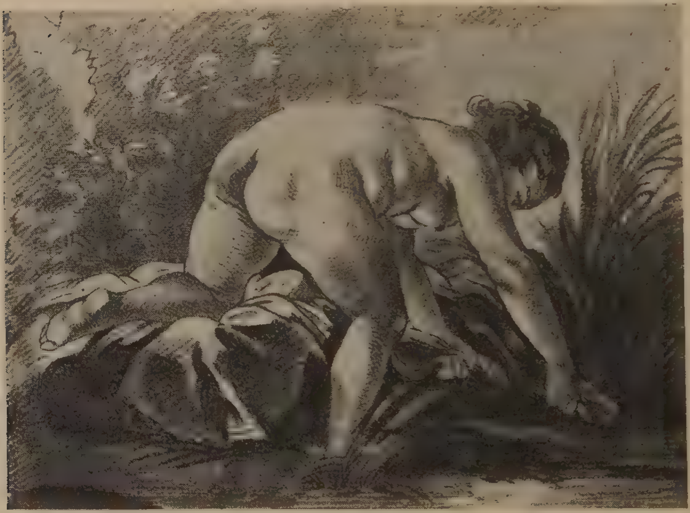
Although Antoine Watteau gave his last days to Pater, and a little of his nervous vivacity to Lancret, it is neither Pater nor Lancret who will continue his course, when he will no longer be there; they will not follow in the very direction taken by that aristocracy of birth and culture which seems to obey some order coming from the living depths which it exploits, and thereby determines its fall and hastens its dissolution. On the contrary, it is, as always, the disciples of the master who try to maintain intact the form he created, around which they have not seen life breaking down and moving. And yet almost everyone else is touched by his grace; they alone live in the setting he discovered. Watteau never ceased to hear the torrent of Rubens's blood, the beat of his heart, and the air murmuring in his breast, and so Rubens will, for a hundred years, breathe into the atmosphere of France a little of that fat and shining fluidity of northern painting the source of which the last painters of Louis XIV went to seek in Flanders and in England, forgetting the road to Rome, whence the School was returning, moreover, in full, though unconscious, revolt. Largillière is still alive. He often sets up his easel out of doors, under the trees, to paint his court people, and when they refuse to pose, one sees clearly, from their somewhat disordered appearance, that they are coming from him or are returning to him. Men like Coypel, Van Loo, de Troy, and a dozen artists around them who represent the School, will assume, in their mythological pictures and their state portraits, a careless elegance and a freedom of accent which indicate that people have been reading the "Lettres persanes," that Voltaire has returned from his journey to England, and that the bad King Louis XV is abandoning the good Queen Leczinska. The assembly of the gods is held in the boudoir of the favorites. All the good sculptors of the century, old Coyzevox first of all, in whom Puget is still felt, and already Clodion as well, then Lemoine, Pajou, Pigalle, Falconet, the brothers Adam, and Bouchardon, will not be quite themselves until they have introduced into the fashionable Olympus, chubby Eros or Venus at her toilette, like a lady of elegance well versed in matters of love. And Nattier will paint the princesses of the blood as rustic divinities, almost disrobed at times, their arms and their feet bare, and with flowers garlanded on their dresses, around their fingers, and in their hair. Rose bushes grow among the yews and the trimmed boxwood of Versailles.

Those roses, moreover, do not lose their petals as soon as they are picked. They will be applied all along the walls, they will encircle the sofas and the ladies who chat there, they will be around mirrors and chandeliers, and will be suspended from the canopies of the beds. Everyone, like Coypel and Caylus, for example, talks of "imitating nature." But upon condition that it submit to the caprice of the society least prepared to feel it living in man, and to experience its mystic intoxication, without which art loses the sole cause of its eternal character. Watteau is a king of the spirit whom the aristocracy of France will obey. But it will take its revenge, in its turn, by giving its orders to those who will succeed Watteau. "Nature" will reduce itself to a kind of *objet d'art* placed on a shelf, and destined for the usage of fashion set by those who possess favor and money, which, by the way, they employ with extreme elegance.

Hôtel Biron (1728).

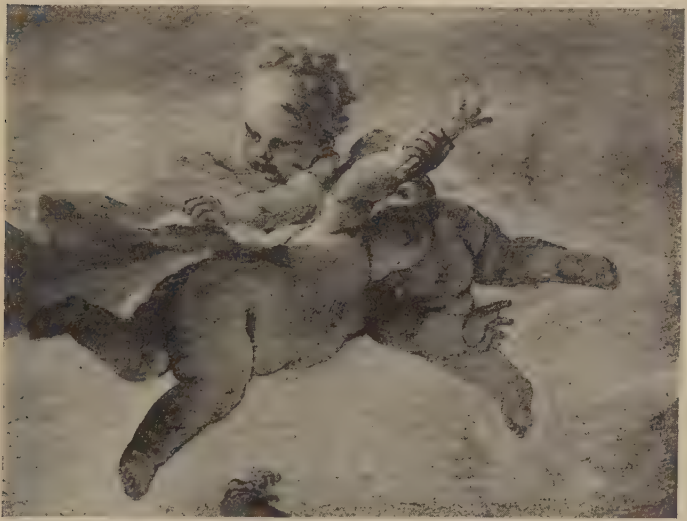
Watteau being dead, the eighteenth century is æsthetically bankrupt of taste. The entire *élite* is furnished with an intense art education, which rises and broadens in it in the measure that creative force declines and shrinks in the souls of the artists, its servitors. It is drawing-room art, which does not pass the limits of the drawing-room (*salon*). The exhibitions of paintings are themselves "Salons." Painters, sculptors, engravers, jewelers, goldsmiths, cabinet-makers, hair-dressers, tailors, and bootmakers all contribute to surround the fine flower of a highly developed culture with this frail and creeping frame which brings out its splendor, but which tightens around it, gradually causes its natural origins to be lost to view, and exhausts itself in satisfying a spirit which is fading and dying of ingenuity and ennui. Everywhere, around the conversationalist and the coquette, in crystal, unglazed porcelain, marble, and tapestry, from the glass cabinet for bibelots to the tableware, from the carriage to the sedan chair, and from the antechamber to the alcove, this charming art repeats and reflects the words exchanged about love, about new-born science, about Persia, about China, about the spectacles of the day, and about the countryside seen from an opera box. A fashionable art, which uses up and completely drains the amiability of the artist, scatters it with the flights of the Amors and the flowers which are strewn about, disperses it through a thousand toilet articles, and debases it through those same surroundings.

François Boucher is its soul. Fashion insinuates itself and fixes itself around his easy fecundity, which everywhere, on ceilings, screens, carriage panels, and small friezes above doors, on caskets and fans, scatters its monotonous subjects—shepherdesses and pastorals. Charming in manner, generous, one who loved enjoyment and who is adored by men and women, ceaselessly exchanging with his century that which they both need in order to love and be loved, he stands, with the mistress of the king, at the center of his own revolving circle of winged loves and of flowers woven in garlands, which he is quite free—as artists of his race alone are—to bring forth in greatest profusion and to hang up wherever it pleases the alert and spontaneous fantasy of his desire, which is ever in accord with his requirements. In order to yield to the flexible grace of this world, where philosophic and gallant conversation flows on sinuous lines and makes delicate détours, everything adapts itself without effort to the forms imagined by the architect and the cabinet-maker of society, forms tending constantly more toward the circular. The fat, soft roundnesses turn with the woodwork and the frames; there are chubby shepherds, beribboned shepherdesses, and serving maids whom the



Boucher. Girl bathing, red chalk (*Private collection*).

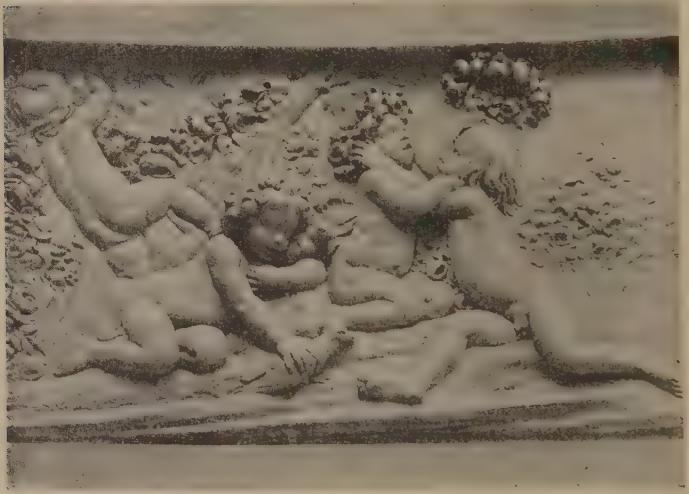
painter raises to the dignity of goddesses by disrobing them, to show their full-blooded young flesh, their smiles, their dimples, and the elastic and quickly swelling curve of their buttocks and their breasts. The plump children of Bouchardon, the sculptor, are swept into the dance. Fragonard is prefigured; and Boucher, through his savory master Lemoyne, through Watteau, and through the world of decorators and artisans inspired by him, links the whole fragile setting of the French aristocracy with the supreme teaching of the Italian fête which Tiepolo, at the same time with him, is unfurling over the ceiling of Venetian bedchambers and drawing-rooms. Almost freed from form, the aërial harmonies sprinkle, with the rouge of cheeks and the powder from puffs, light skies, where the whirl of



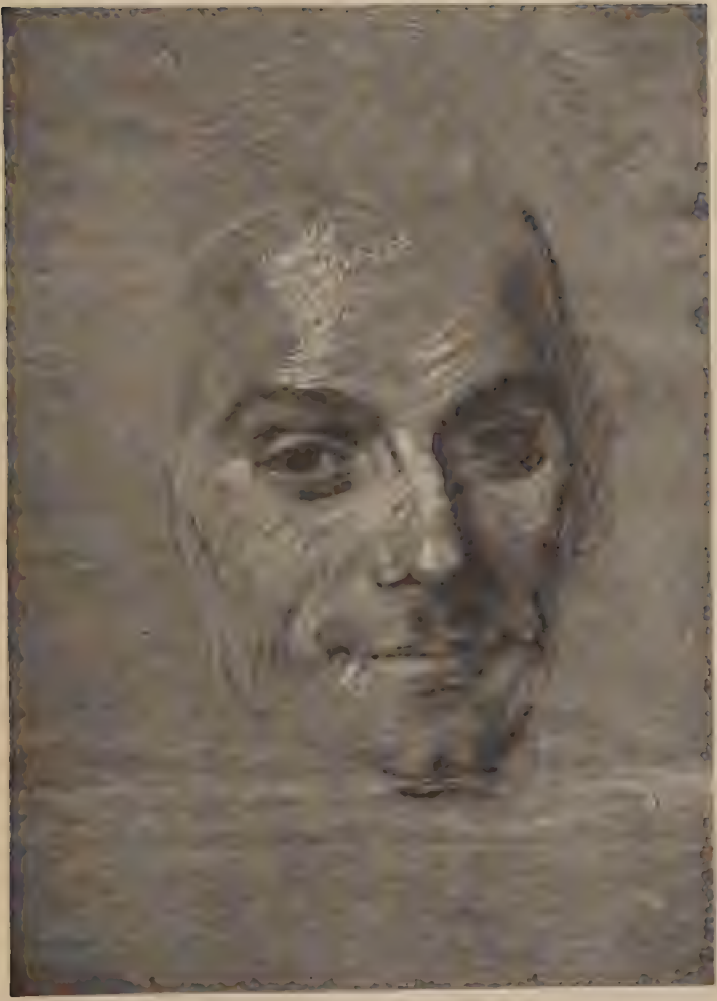
BOUCHER. Loves, detail (*Louvre*).

the clouds effaces itself little by little in the diffused rose and silver.

Unfortunately, the twisted and serpentine line prevents the decorator from making a complete escape into space and ever recalls him to labor for the tyrannous world of fashion, for which he was born. He remains the prisoner of the prince. For the first time, the artist is admitted to the drawing-room and the table, with the critic who dictates rules, the *littérateur* who explains, the scientist who diffuses knowledge, and the philosopher who destroys. It is the painter and the sculptor who lose most through these contacts; they are ill at ease between rationalistic analysis and sentimental abstraction; they forget, little by little, the life of the profound volumes and of the colors steeped in rain and in light, when they enter upon moral considerations, where they very quickly lose their way. The only one



BOUCHARDON. The Fountain of Grenelle. detail.



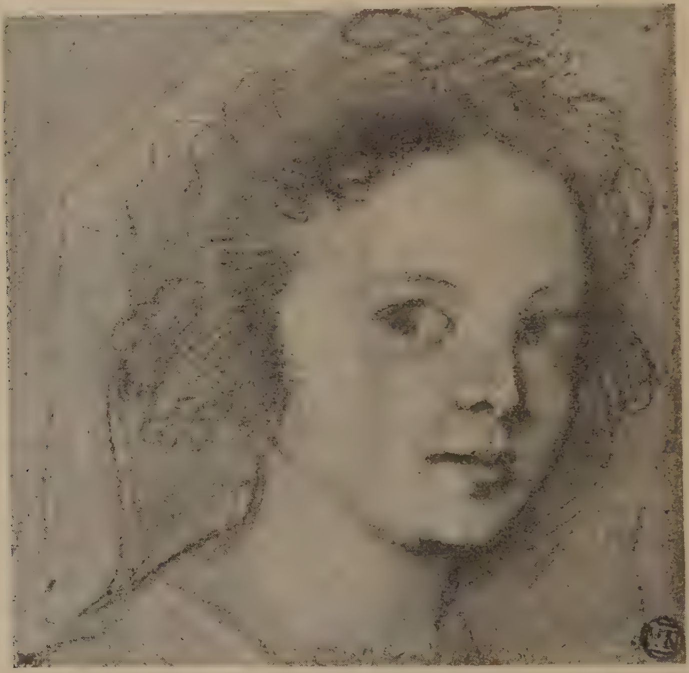
La Tour. Portrait of J. Vernet (*Dijon*).

who gains is the newsmonger of plastics, who grows up somewhere between the rhymer of epigrams and the indiscreet confidant—the engraver of anecdotes of gallantry and of spicy gossip, who pretends that he was present, concealed behind a screen, at the disrobing of the bride, at the consultation of the marquise, and at the vicomte's or the abbé's capture by assault of the chambermaid. The genius for gossip, rendered sharp and subtle by a century of the life of fashion, overflows the drawing-rooms, the suppers, and the teas in the English style, and sweeps over everything that is expressed by pen, pencil, or modeling tool. Cochin, Beaudoin, Moreau the younger, Eisen, Leprince, and the Saint-Aubins create a chronicle of fashion peculiar to this country and this period. Conversations are carried on in exquisite style with a pastel crayon, a luminous engraving, pretty as a blonde—that one finds on turning the pages of a tale of gallantry or of a classic tragedy, or in a delicate, powdered head on a translucent medallion a quarter the size of one's hand. Everything is conversation—letters to the ladies, the article in the Encyclopédie, the short story by Voltaire, and the critique by Diderot. A witty word shakes a world, and a hundred thousand such words are struck off every day.

III

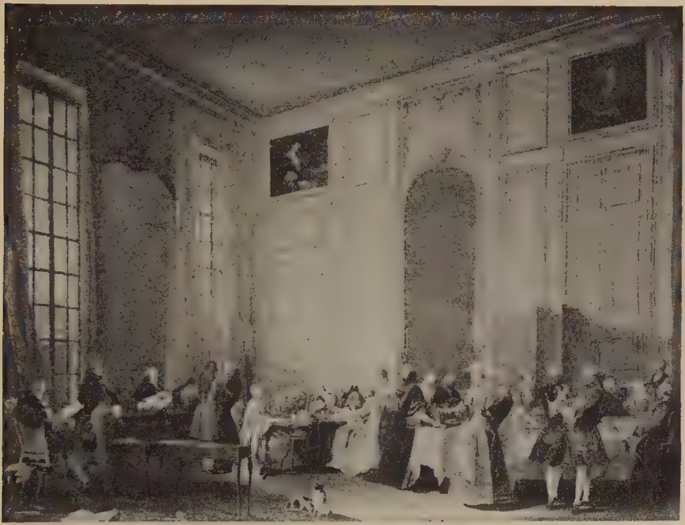
The art of the century converses, which is what saves it, while condemning it to a place below the great intuitions that open the spirit to lyricism when it is freed from the necessity for giving pleasure and for killing time. These sharp images, in their thin language, with a wrinkle at the corner of the mouth, or the dimple in a chin, or dilated nostrils, or an upturned nose, succeed in relating what is most furtive—but also most characteristic of the thing itself and of its time—in the inmost soul of a prelate, or a writer, or a man of the court, or a woman of fashion; but there is nothing save their appearance in these images to relate them with the grandly sensual art of plastics, to which psychology makes but a weak appeal. But they bring us testimony of a singularly sincere exchange between him who listens and looks, and him who speaks and acts. Perronneau is not often a painter. But he is always a precise observer, clear and firm in his language, and abandoning nothing without first interrogating it. The faces of those around him pass from his eye to his hand as if his intelligence were a filter retaining everything that is not the expression of the intelligence. La Tour is not an artist. He is a mirror. He does not imagine a new form into which all the elements of the world, magnified, enter at a single bound and raise life to the level of a soul. Of the school of Voltaire, a friend of Voltaire, he criticizes, like Voltaire, with a line exact and dry. When, in his later years, he pretends telling more than he can and more than he knows how to tell, he comes to grief. Meeting the empty mask halfway, the mind is registered by crisp strokes. Under the mask, there is neither form nor matter. The mind stands alone, isolated from the heart, and reduced to the accurately fitted mechanism through which it dissects and classifies. There is nothing but the skin; the bones are lacking; but in the skin, shriveling and grimacing, there is a flash of lightning from the mouth and the eye. People think that this century is material. It is nothing but mind, dried-up mind that twists and consumes and corrodes. All there is of charm and of youth is burned in it, like a moth in the flame of a lamp.

It is mind, and its passion is entirely of the mind. It is a critic, which is why it is not a poet. It is sentimental, which is why it is not plastic. It is declamatory, which is why it is not lyrical. It is sensitive, which is why it is not sensual. It leads a double life. The one demonstrates, the other devotes itself to enjoyment. And when one does no more than demonstrate, one never goes to life to ask it to educate one's desire and make it fruitful. And when one devotes oneself merely to enjoyment, one never turns to the mind to deepen and purify one's enjoyment. Watteau and Gluck apart, in whom love is mingled with tears, and lips never give themselves save with a deep sob, and an ecstasy of lamentation rises from laughter and song, this century has no love for love. He who loves ideas builds on ideas alone. He talks, and he paints ideas,



A. Coypel. Young Girl, drawing (*Louvre*).

in an intellectual idiom. He yields himself upon command. His emotion reveals itself only under such circumstances, and apropos of such sentiments. And he who loves women loves them only for the pleasure that he gets from them, forces this pleasure, falsifies it, and ends in aberration. There is no unity. The century analyzes itself to the point of splitting its fibers in two, and lives along two divergent lines, which separate more and more. And so, at about midway, it results in a deviation of sentiment and a monotonous debauch which find no common ground upon which to realize an equilibrium and to liberate from matter—loved in all its aspects and passionately enjoyed—the mind charged with love which is simply its whole essence. It seeks counsel of it in order to purify and ennoble its own self more and more.



OLLIVIER. A Tea at the Palace of the Prince de Conti (*Louvre*).

Hence, we have on one side Greuze, and on the other Fragonard. The one, who might have expressed, demonstrates; the other, who might have loved, amuses himself. The one bores us a great deal; the other irritates us a little. Moreover, both deceive themselves. That is not nobility, and love is not that. Greuze, whom the good Diderot,[1] who nevertheless loved painting and even understood it, urges on to render moralizing dramas by means of painting, explores, as soon as he is not watched, the camisole of little girls; weighs with a shining and quickly averted glance the breasts heavy as fruits seen through the shadowy opening of bodices, and surrounds the eyes and the lips of the women with a moist and troubled atmosphere which veils his lubricity. Fragonard, who gives himself up to his work as a painter of bedrooms and boudoirs, and who applies himself to it unrestrainedly, sometimes grows tender at the sight of the soft roundnesses which he discovers, and, in a few triumphant sketches, gives rein to the healthiest sensuality. One forgets the excess of puffy skins, and of trees and rocks blown up like unhealthy flesh, for the sake of a round thigh perceived under a flying drapery, for an undulating and hollow back caressed by the moist penumbra, for a breast stretching and swelling under the arm that enfolds it. Clodion, the sculptor of bacchanales, whose work is associated discreetly with the decoration of the lovers' chamber, or finds a more intimate refuge in the dressing room, or even at the depths of a secret closet, has more of love, of health, of intoxicated freedom. After the flying huntresses and the naïads of Jean Goujon, between the beautiful nymphs of Versailles surprised at their bath by Girardon and the female fauns of Carpeaux, drawn forth from the woods to slip into the fêtes of the cities, to smile, to dance, and to disappear—Clodion's bibelot, caressed and whirling, affirms that woman, in this too-rascally and too-moral century, is not very different from her sister, the woman of all time, protectress of life, and made for natural love which she attracts and retains by her furtive mystery.

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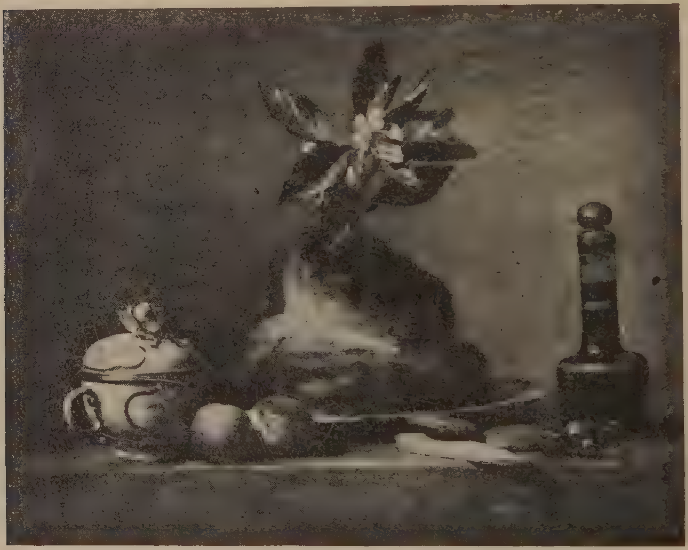
[1] His *Essai sur la Peinture* is a masterpiece.

The century had misunderstood her. It had made of her now a philosopher, now a beast of pleasure.

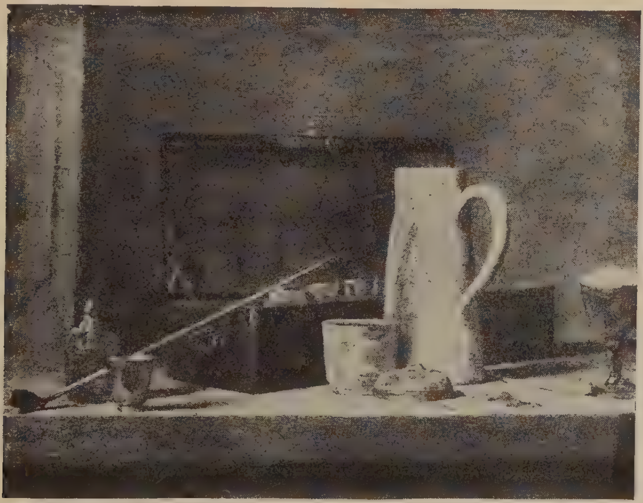
Aix en Province. Hôtel d'Albertas (1756).

One feels her to be superior to these two things in some of those portraits, so often anonymous, or escaping the intellectual emotion of Perronneau, of Drouais, of La Tour, or of Houdon especially, who have given her to us so worthy of being loved under the skepticism forced upon her and under her slightly sad smile. Her generosity takes the place of virtue, she makes tolerance a revolutionary weapon, and never seems more an aristocrat than when she comes out of the gutter. On these faces one sees hovering a native finesse which goes beyond intelligence, a winged nobility which has no need of morality, a living grace superior to beauty. These are the women who, after having read the *Nouvelle Héloise*, will all go toward Rousseau in a frenzy of eager adoration, to thank him for having restored them to their sex, for having understood that they have a function of sentiment, and for having led them away from the privilege of philosophizing without emotion, and of loving without love. All those ironical pouts swell with loving tears. Why is Watteau no longer there? Gluck arrives, and at once he is understood. Yesterday, everything belonged to reason, everything to science. To-day everything belongs to sentiment. Or rather, rationalism becomes



Chardin. The Bun (*Louvre*).

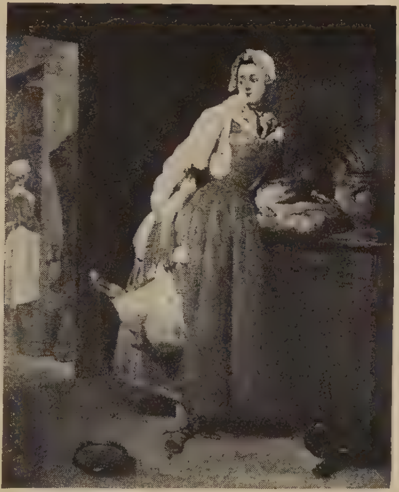
a thing of sentiment and passion. In the name of "nature," gradually recovered by newborn science, and by criticism, which has turned around itself, morality returns to fashion. The immoralist Diderot himself sheds tears before all these beautiful sentiments, and takes Greuze by the collar to drag him to them by force. As happens so often in France, in a few months there is a change of front. Exaggerated negation everywhere arouses the affirmations opposed to it. "Nature" made man good; it is society that mars him. Freed by knowledge of "nature" and of himself, he need now do no more than efface himself, and consent to the *Contrat Social.* The Protestant spirit, which had been marching on underground since the time of the Jansenists, of Bayle, and of Montesquieu's books, was to burst forth into the daylight with the philosopher of Geneva, and with it, England, her literature, her



CHARDIN. Still-life (*Louvre*).

economic science, and her naturalistic philosophy, enter among us. The French gardens are thrown into confusion so that winding roads may be traced among them, irregular lakes dug there, and trees planted at random on the great lawns. Everyone hastens to the fields, milks his cow in his cottage, grows sentimental over the mother suckling her last-born child, and raises temples to love. The great architecture of France, which, since Descartes, had been continuing on its straight road during those periods of pure abstraction, and was discreetly bathing its elegant logic in the life of fashion and the free grace of the time, gave forth, with the admirable Gabriel, its supreme blossom: buildings of medium size, never too large, almost always small, whose harmony, clear and measured as that of a cantata by Rameau, seems to call upon the trees, the clouds, and all the accidents of space and of the soil to yield to its equilibrium, not to spread themselves forth in too great disorder, not to listen to any excessive impulse, but to accept without constraint the proportion which man gives to all the beautiful things amid which he lives.

The last and, it must be said, one of the most admirable efforts of the collective genius of the race, it is through an apparent reversal of the habitual laws that it appears in this time of rising individualism, which still possesses, however, an impeccable workmanly tradition, and, within a political and moral philosophy held in common, makes its general effort in common. The art of building is the least sensual, the most intellectual, of all. Geometry and logic are profoundly cultivated; the style of ornament is pushed to its most extreme limits of refinement and research; taste is sure; luxury is fervent. Everything needed for the palace, the princely mansion, the pavilion, and the château is here: the last French architecture—by its impeccable measure, its discreet rhythm, its musical proportions, its nervous structure, at once slender and firm, under ornamentation the least apparent and the rarest, with its admirable decision to suppress decorative overloading of the big rooms, and to preserve for them great empty places, spacious as the intelligence, with tall, clear mirrors which raise them and broaden them again—is the essential art of this time. But it will come to an end, almost suddenly, and will make way, with all the accessories which accompany it, for a sentimental form of construction, still logically conceived, which will combat its first principle and entirely ruin it.

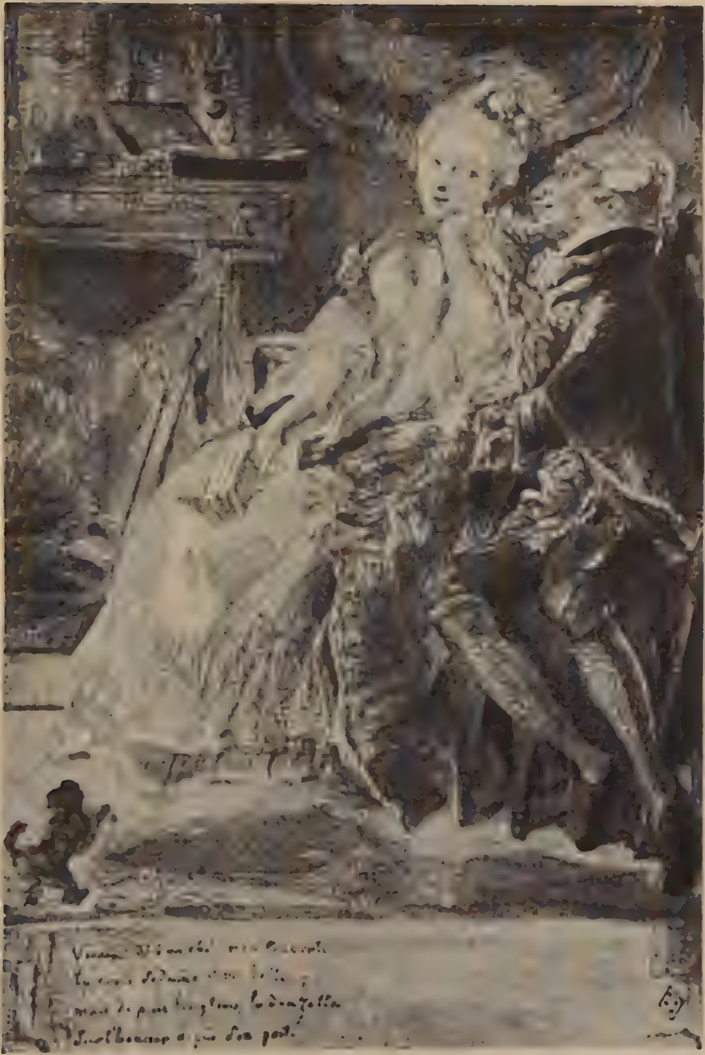


CHARDIN. The Marketer (*Louvre*)

At bottom, this is the end of a great aristocracy and the essay at the establishment of another. It was in vain for the one that was dying to deify Voltaire during his lifetime. If it was he who gave its meaning and value to its dissolution; it was also he who killed it, by breaking all the idols which guarded it from dissolution. The impartiality of Houdon penetrated the destroyer seated on the ruins, with his shriveled hands and his infernal laughter, as well as it comprehended the generosity or the obstinacy of the builders—Diderot, welcoming everything and making a confidant of life which flows forward and backward, and passes away, and constitutes itself anew; Rousseau testing all his materials with a suspicious and stubborn attention; and Buffon, with his powerful, round face which tells us of the germination of the myths of the future. The tender women of Trianon and of Versailles will do no more than follow a fashion, or else arrive, too late, at the sentiment of liberation. The palaces crumble, and the work of the artificial cottages does not sufficiently roughen the hands. The elements for the restoration of souls are in those blackest and most swarming quarters which behold the heaping up and the toiling of the men and women of Paris.

IV

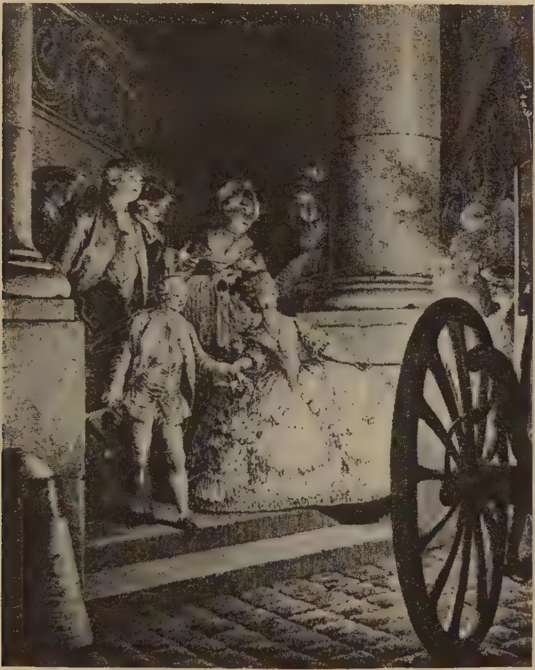
Chardin proves it. He is the son of a carpenter. He does not leave his street. He paints signs. He exhibits in the open air, at the Place Dauphine. Later on, to be sure, he sends to the Salon. But he has no contact with the world of fashion, none with the court, and little with the artists, the critics, and the collectors. He is an honest fellow, a worthy man. His life is that of the lower middle class. He is a good workman. That is all. Since he knows his trade as well as it can be known, he is indulgent toward those who do not know it, for he understands its difficulties. He does not paint much, because he paints slowly, with a laborious and passionate application. He has no models. His wife, his children, a few familiar animals, the every-day tableware and cooking utensils; and then there are meat, vegetables, bread, and wine bought that same day from the butcher, the meat-roaster, the baker, and the vegetable seller. With that he writes the legend of domestic labor and the obscure life; his images speak to us after the manner of La Fontaine's words, and he is, with Watteau and Goya,



G. de Saint-Aubin. The Dotard (*Private collection*).

the greatest painter there is in Europe between the death of Rembrandt and the maturity of Corot and of Delacroix.

One must see how he lived, in the rooms of that time where there was but little light, and where, for a century, the family was organized and renewed amid the same objects. From the moment when he arises, while dressing, while at table, and in the little trips from the pantry to the dining room, and from the yard to the cellar, he looks, he meditates, and, to transport that which he has seen into the intimate poem which rises peacefully from his heart to his fingers, he need do nothing but awaken the sonorities in the things sleeping around him. Why should he take any other background than the bare wall, or any other air than the one he breathes with the remainder of his family? Everything will get its accent through its exact shadings and its transparence; the apparent monotony will concentrate in intimate silence the savor, the secret spirit, and the expressive force of things. "One uses colors, but it is with sentiment that one paints." Yes, indeed. The whole splendor resides exclusively in the voluptuousness of the act of painting which no one, except Vermeer of Delft, to be sure, ever possessed to that degree. The good painter Chardin performs his task with love, like a good carpenter, a good mason, a good turner, or any good workman who has reached the point of loving the material that he works in and the tool which saves him from tiresome uniformity, and which raises him to the dignity of knowing his means. There is no more love expended on the bare arm coming out of the rolled-up sleeve than on the napkin that it holds, and on the leg of mutton which fills the cloth and weighs down the fat, pink hand. In the "Bénédicité," it is with the same attention that he paints the little girl saying grace so diligently, in order to get her soup more quickly, the mamma who is going to serve her and watches her with amusement, and the harmonies of the middle-class home which surround the group—the aprons, the woolen dresses, the blue stripe running through the tablecloth, the tureen, the varnished oak furniture, and the shadow which circles round everything and caresses everything. He knows that all of these things harmonize, that the life of objects depends on the moral life of people, and that the moral life of people receives the reflection of objects. Everything existing



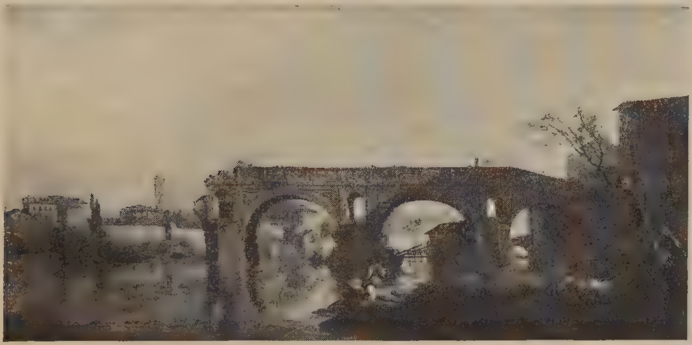
Moreau the Younger. The Little Godparents, engraving.

deserves his tender respect. In France, he is, with Watteau, the only religious painter in this century without religion.

He animates his material with an inner flame, which he never allows to flash forth, and which he locks up in the things at the very moment when they are about to issue forth from him. He knows them all so well! Here is the tureen from which, each day, he sees arising the odorous steam from the cabbages and carrots which his wife brought from the market. That fish covered with slime and blood has just been cleaned so that it may be eaten that evening with sauce, with leeks, bread rubbed with garlic, and wine. Here is his glass. Here is his spectacle case. Here are Madame Chardin's thimble, scissors, work-basket, and balls of wool and of thread. She has been wearing for a long time that good, plum-colored dress striped with mauve

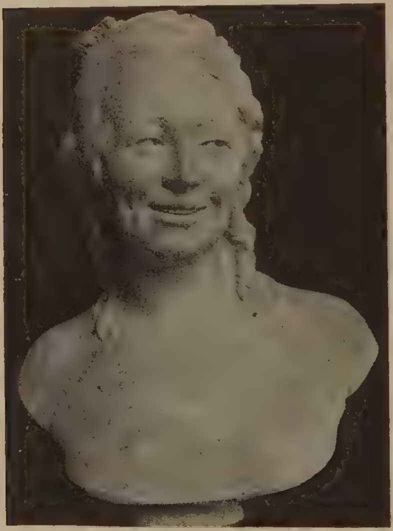
Gabriel. The Ministry of the Marine, detail.

and blue. By the way he has of placing that pipe on the table, one guesses that he smokes it every day. He expends so much application, love, and delicacy in painting it, that he seems to be afraid of breaking it. With that earthenware picture and with that milky porcelain, he incorporates the flowers painted on them, just as the sun and life mingle with fruits the color of their juice, and with flesh the color of its blood. Everything, the sinkstone, the oak table, the three eggs which have been deposited on it, the knife, and the copper water urn on which a silver plate is awakened by a reflection, take on, through his loverlike insistence, an appearance like that of fruit. One would say that stone and wood were first reduced to a powder in order to be mixed with that red liquor sleeping in the crystal, with the gleaming blue of that blade, with the varnished red or green of that apple which has just rolled on the table between that glazed cup and that ivory-toned chinaware, and then concentrated and rendered denser by the fervor of the artist as he caresses its grain. Mingled with blue, with rose, and with gold, the whites of the earthenware and of the



Joseph Vernet. Ponte Rotto, Rome (*Louvre*).

table linen seem steeped in the light which bathes the palette and the brush. The sugar which autumn has condensed in the ripe fruits oozes from those heavy bunches of grapes and from those great pale peaches, and that hot bun, with the sprig of laurel on top of it, is fat with melted butter. That ivory top you see spinning, that pencil-holder halfway withdrawn from a bureau drawer, that white paper, and that goose quill seem a condensation of the material atmosphere. The pearly mist which composes it seems to thicken here and there into white feathers, into powdered hair, and into silk ribbons of vague color gently animating the motionless penumbra surrounding the inconceivable mystery of the form awakened by the mind and fashioned by the hand. In the limited space, all aquiver with gray dust, the merging reflections accumulate and reply to one another and come into accord so that, at a distance, they may create a harmony so measured that all its elements are effaced, and that it speaks with a single voice. Chardin paints each object with the combined reflections of all the other objects, foreseeing the living conquests of those who will come more than a century after he is gone, and he demonstrates, through the limpid purity of his



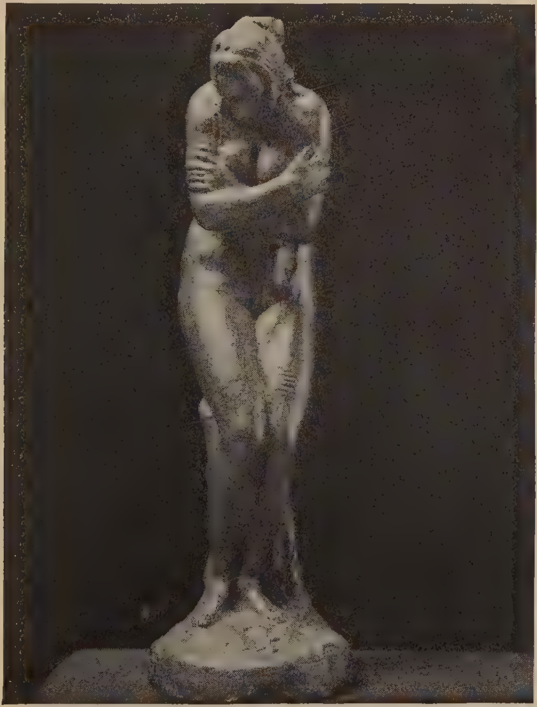
HOUDON. Mme. Houdon (*Louvre*).

style, that melody can contain the richest polyphonic tumult, as a single sentence spoken by a profound man can express the whole intoxicating complexity of the dramas he has lived.

All by himself he suffices to show that, by their attentive mind, their conscious honesty, their faculty of organization, and their combination of delicacy and vigor, the lower middle-class artisans of France are worthy to seize the power of the king. For the artist of fashion, with his adorable ease, can no longer build and preserve, any more than can the totally decadent class which caresses and feeds him. A dozen painters or engravers, Louis Gabriel Moreau, with his luminous, clear-cut landscapes, Gabriel de Saint-Aubin, with his savory chronicles, Lépicié, a good craftsman in painting and in engraving, and Joseph Vernet, though he feels the need of excusing his transparent and golden vision of space by a Roman frame which cannot crush him, form, between Chardin and the artists of fashion, a kind of continuing chain in which one finds, to a greater or less extent and with all the intermediary degrees, the solidity of substance of the one, and the fugitive charm of the others. Ollivier, who has his qualities of gray, tender, and meticulous vision, seems indeed like a subtle emissary sent by him into the drawing-rooms of fashion to give an image of them which shall not be solely that of a psychologist or of a decorator. Houdon, to be sure, carries on, and far more visibly, the same fight as Chardin when he represents, with his spontaneous penetration, his subtle strength, and his ease, those who give to the Tiers-État the instrument which it needs. He entered far more deeply than Chardin into the intimate mind of women, and even into acquaintance with the adorable astonishment with which children look upon life. And yet, of all, Chardin is the one who best represents, and most exclusively represents, the essential task of the century. Houdon floats, and loses flavor as soon as he tries to deal with the goddesses of the Olympus of Versailles. There is a timid and mannered quality in the others which has caused them to be too quickly forgotten after having been too quickly loved. And it is through Chardin that we see that if the abyss is near, all those who act and work will have the power to cross it.

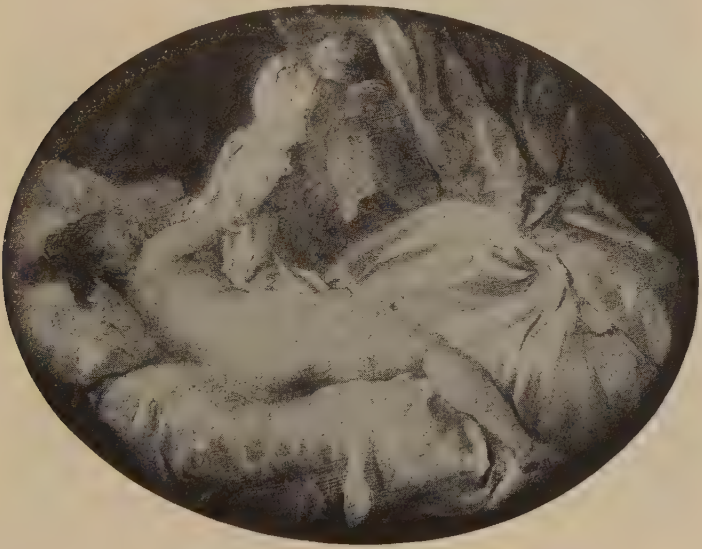
V

But it will be without lyricism. Lyricism never comes when the conquest is being prepared, but is born of the conquest itself, when energy attains its summit and catches its glimpse of the future. The Tiers-État, whose average virtues were expressed by Chardin, imagines itself called upon to strain after effect on the eve of triumph, and to demonstrate its virtue. Rousseau, having dreamed of the absolute man, the successful contestant for political power, ingenuously proposes himself as the realization of that man, and around that idea he organizes his morality, his religion, and—unhappily—his æsthetics also. It should be said that everything tended to give him this rôle. He reacts against the dissolution of the class which he claims to dispossess. Although calling himself a follower of Diderot and Voltaire, he reacts against the skepticism of Voltaire and the philosophy of immorality of Diderot. Imagining himself to deal a blow against Christianity, he reacts, in the name of Christianity, against the irreligion of the *philosophes* and the natural mythology which Buffon and his pupils are preparing to take its place. In reality, what he is claiming to follow is that Cartesian rationalism which, after having organized everything, and then destroyed everything, aspired, when once it was reinforced by Jansenism and by English culture, to reconstruct everything. Finally, the æsthetic and moral decomposition of the century causes him to believe that his victory can be obtained only by reversing its activity in every field. In monuments, furniture, statues, and pictures, a straight bare line will replace the sinuous and overladen line. And the incorruptible man will oppose his rigidity of principle to the amiable cynicism of the lordling of the antechamber and the *dilettante* of government.



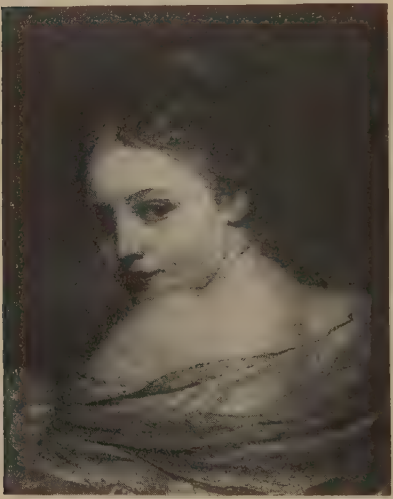
HOUDON. Woman shivering (*Louvre*).

The new order is offered the tool which it demands. For a quarter of a century, Antiquity has been before the minds of men. That way lies Virtue, and there also is Beauty. André Chénier dedicates hymns to David, in whose works Robespierre recognizes the physical expression of that which he himself represents in the moral world; and it is to David that the Convention intrusts the work of organizing Republican æsthetics on the model of the austerity, the pomp, and the stoicism of Rome. His education as a painter and as a man has prepared him to become the Le Brun of the Revolution. As a winner of the Prix de Rome, he finds Rome filled with the fever of archæology. Less than twenty years before, there had occurred the discovery of the mummified cities, Herculaneum and Pompeii. Piranesi's engravings circulate everywhere and animate the ruins of Rome with a somber and living spirit. Hubert Robert haunts the crumbling walls there, the unequal colonnades, the broken vaults covered by ivy and grass, and all the fields of dead stones where the ground, as its level rises, still gives a glimpse, here and there, of half-buried gods. Joseph Vernet descends from the two emigrants of the great century, Claude and Poussin. Since the time when Vico created the philosophy of History, the very soil of Italy seems to awaken. The tragedies of Alfieri exalt the republican virtues, Beccaria wrests Crime and Punishment from the domination of mediæval theology. Canova will soon come, to resuscitate his stale heroes and to make a drawing-room propaganda for Davidian doctrines adjusted to the understanding of the ladies of easy virtue, of the diplomats, and the *littérateurs*. The Germans seek to found a science of æsthetics on the basis of a Greco-Latin archæology that is insufficiently understood. Winckelmann has just written his History, Lessing publishes a whole volume on the tiresome Laocoön. In France, besides, where Montesquieu, by his *Grandeur et Décadence des Romains*, pointed the road long ago, where Soufflot is building the Panthéon, where the Encyclopédie has had to search the ancient world through and through, and where Caylus, a man of taste, to whom the artists lent a willing ear, is writing innumerable memoirs on the sculptured stones and the medals, Barthélemy and Volney are recovering from the earth the august cities and their customs; and the reading of Plutarch carves the statues of antiquity in the soul of the young men.

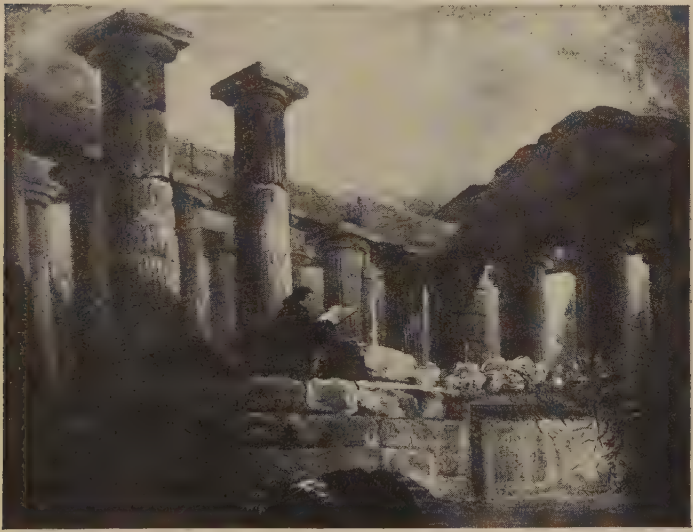


Fragonard. The disrobing (*Louvre*).

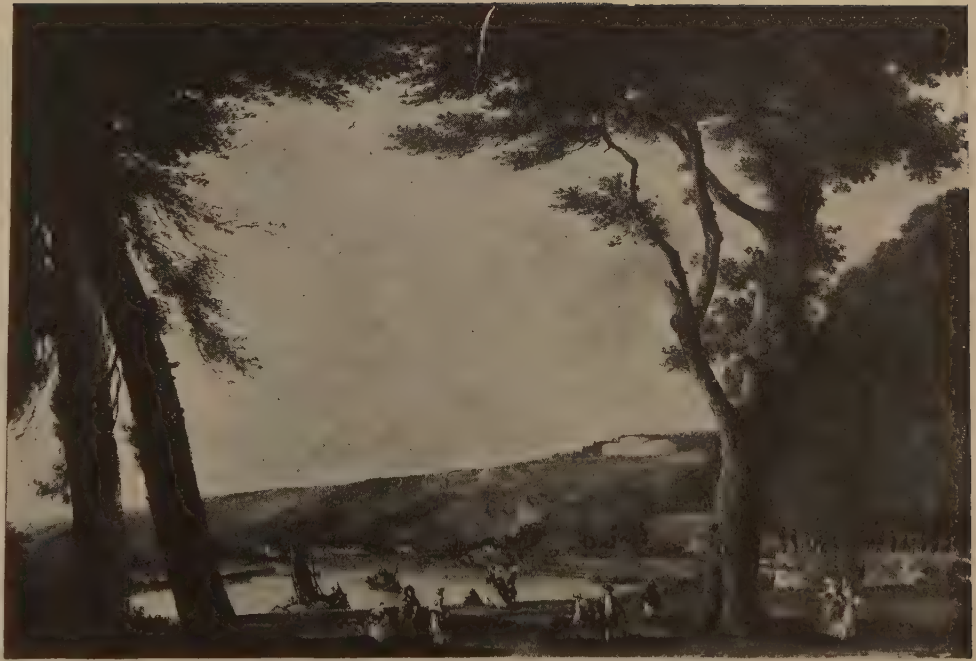
A nephew of Boucher, and loving Fragonard, issuing from them and retaining their imprint, Louis David sees clearly that if their century still kept some reflection of living life, it is to them that it owes it, to them who, after all, represent the direct descent from Watteau and from Rubens. It is in their name that he so harshly combats the Academy, which the Convention suppresses as soon as he demands it. But between them and him there is the distance between the conversationalists and the journalists who prepare the revolution and those who made it. They destroyed; he constructs. As he thinks to rediscover in the Roman marbles the discipline he needs in order to look truth in the face, he goes straight ahead to it, his head down, and his back turned on the men and the things of his time. He does not see that he is falling into the same error as the School which he execrates, and that, jealous of his authority, he is substituting the dogma of the antique for the dogma of the Renaissance.


GREUZE. Young girl (*Montpellier*).

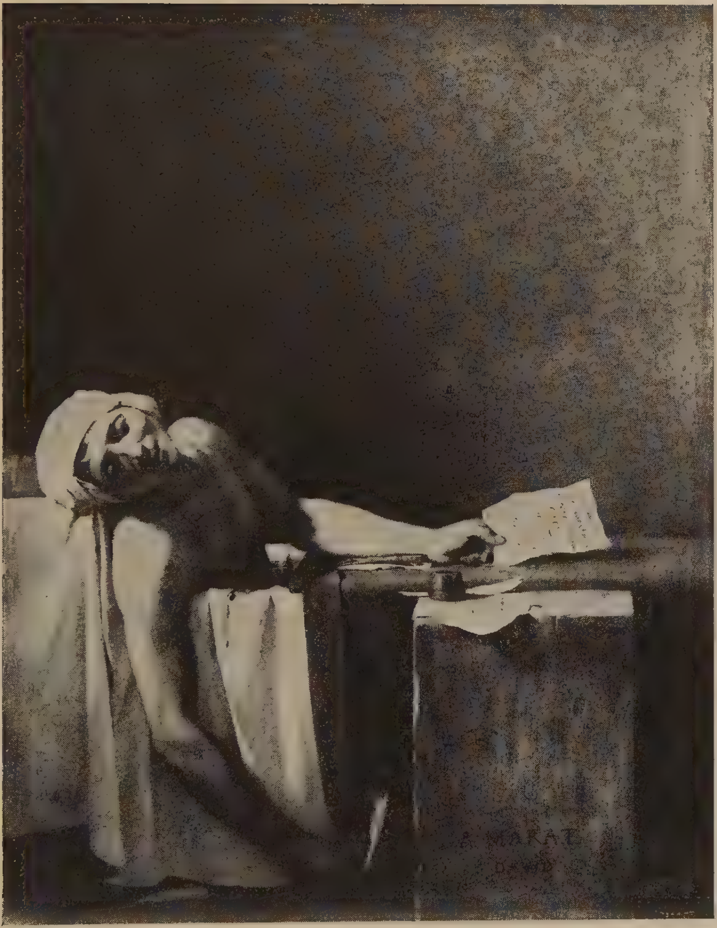
His whole life, thenceforward, will be a stubborn and laborious collaboration between his nature as an artist and his will as an æsthetician, between the needs of his being and the beliefs of his time. He is a painter, as much as anyone can be. In those of his scenes from history in which the external movement is most closely copied from the ancient statues, in those of his pictures of the ceremonies of his time which are most directly brought back, by their cold, stiff arrangement, to the basreliefs of Roman arches, a purple robe, a cushion of blue velvet, a golden embroidery, a plume, or a silk flag, everything connected with his immediate time, such as an accessory impossible to modify as to its material, is painted with the richest, densest, and most opaque splendor. Whenever he is not treating the nude body, the rigidity of the ensembles—always built up from without and by the processes of a technique interpreted according to its appearances and never according to its spirit—is sometimes forgotten before the intensity of the harmonies and the splendor of matter, which by an act of his will he deprives of its fire. One thinks of some Spanish painter of the seventeenth century, Zurbarán, for example, whose monklike severity was no obstacle to his perceiving the thickness of fustian robes, the dense pallor of bread, the sonorous and hard grain of



Hubert Robert. Ruins (*Private collection*).

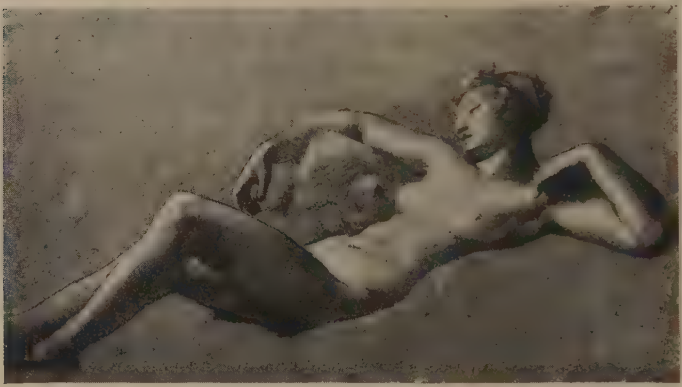


L. G. Moreau. The Slopes of Meudon (*Louvre*).

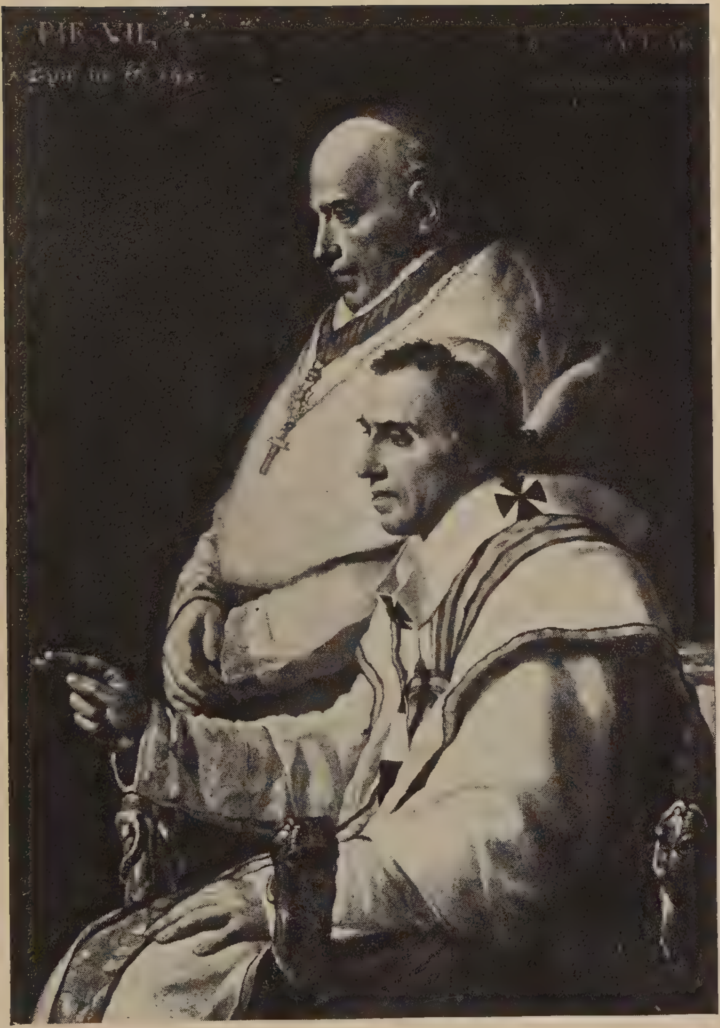

À MARAT
DAVID

DAVID. Marat (*Brussels*).

earthen pots, and even a certain silvery palpitation of the sky as it receded to the far horizon. And often he makes us think of some story-teller of our France, robust and truculent, by the way he paints a rosy-faced church singer, or a fat-bellied canon, whom one must search out patiently in the least visible corner of some solemn canvas, but whom La Fontaine would find, and whom Courbet did not fail to see. Almost always his will outstrips his sensibility, but sometimes it is the latter which forces the former to retreat. How many portraits he has left unfinished, intentionally perhaps, the painter in him having been warned by his emotion at the instant when they were attaining their highest degree of power! Doubtless, he had, at such moments, the courage, so rare, of being stronger than one's principles and of halting in time. With their gray and troubled backgrounds and their hesitating pigment, with their expressive vigor and their fidelity, they seem as if suspended between the diffused life in which man's emotional existence begins, and consciousness in which



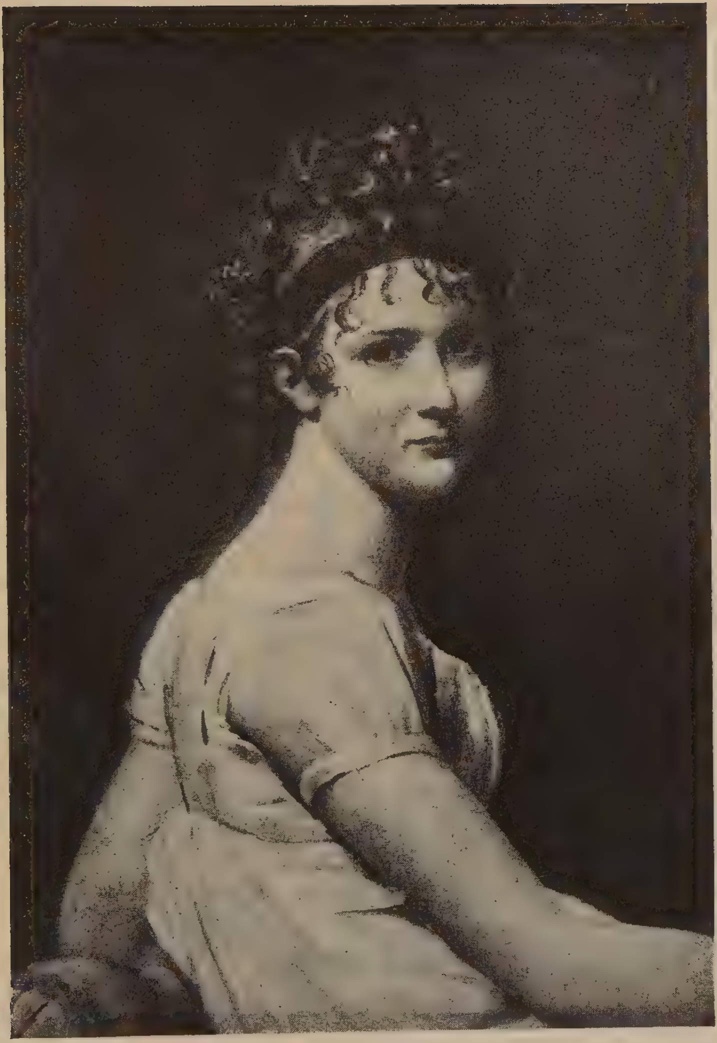
PRUD'HON. Sleeping Venus, drawing (*Ecole des Beaux-Arts*).



David. Portraits of Pius VII and of Caprara (*Private collection*).

his intellectual empire begins. They live, and yet their life remains between precise limits. They are built like monuments, and yet their surface moves. They breathe force and liberty at one and the same time. It is before them that one understands fully David's chagrin when, in 1816, he saw the marbles of the Parthenon. He felt that his career was a long misunderstanding, a permanent confusion between the truth which he encountered and the life which he had believed himself to be seizing.

He is deserving of respect. To be sure, he did not observe the terrible accent of the scenes in which he was often one of the actors. He did not hear the rolling sound of the wooden shoes as the women of the people marched along the pavement, nor the cannon that were defending the different sections of the city. He did not look at the livid heads on the points of the pikes, nor the red streams of blood. He did not listen to the storm rumbling in the breast of Danton. A member of the Convention, one would say that he did not live the tragedy of the Assembly. He did not feel the grand horror of war, nor shudder to have the archangel before his eyes. No matter. He is deserving of respect. He restored to painted matter the substantiality which it had practically lost, and rehabilitated the religious and passionate spirit with which an artist should approach form and consider structure. He is, like the Revolution itself, practically intolerable in the letter, admirable in its intentions and its spontaneous movements. In his presence, one has the sensation of a people regaining control of itself. Everything before him is talk, frivolity, and gossip. Introduced by Rousseau into artistic activity as the Jacobin was introduced into political activity, he comes, stirs minds, and tries to remake a world on the plane of the will. Grace flees, alas, and the remainder of life which it was



DAVID. Mme. Récamier, detail (*Louvre*).

dragging with it; but here is strength appearing, and here we catch a glimpse of truth. An abstract truth, outside of space, outside of the movement and the exchanges of life, to be sure, and corresponding to the abstract man. His æsthetics, it is true, resemble those constitutions drawn from Montesquieu and from Rousseau, borrowed from Geneva, London, or Rome, which jostled one another and tumbled over upon one another for ten years, giving France a political support which neither her aptitudes nor her temperament had prepared her to receive. No matter. During those essays at theory, the spirit of the Revolution, the spirit of life, was spreading over Europe with its armies, and mounting in the sentiment of everyone who was noble and strong.

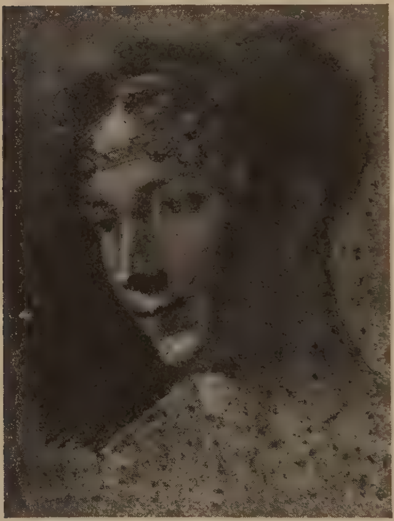
VI

Men saw it well. Kant turned aside from his road. Goethe stopped on his own for a moment. Beethoven took all the winds of heaven to breathe his hope into them. What matter if the France of this great, live century is occupied almost entirely with reason and but little with art! She had quite enough to do with the old myths that were to be beaten down, with the young myths that were to be anticipated, and with the terror and the love that had to be imposed with iron. She had had Montesquieu, Voltaire, Diderot, Jean-Jacques, and Vauvenargues. She had had Buffon, who recreated the earth. She had Laplace, who recreated the sky. She had Lavoisier, who recreated water and fire. She had Lamarck, who recreated life. Germany was offering her hymns to the multitudes and thereby unchaining their spirit.

Mysterious flux and reflux of souls! While an atrocious war was stifling Germany, the aristocratic

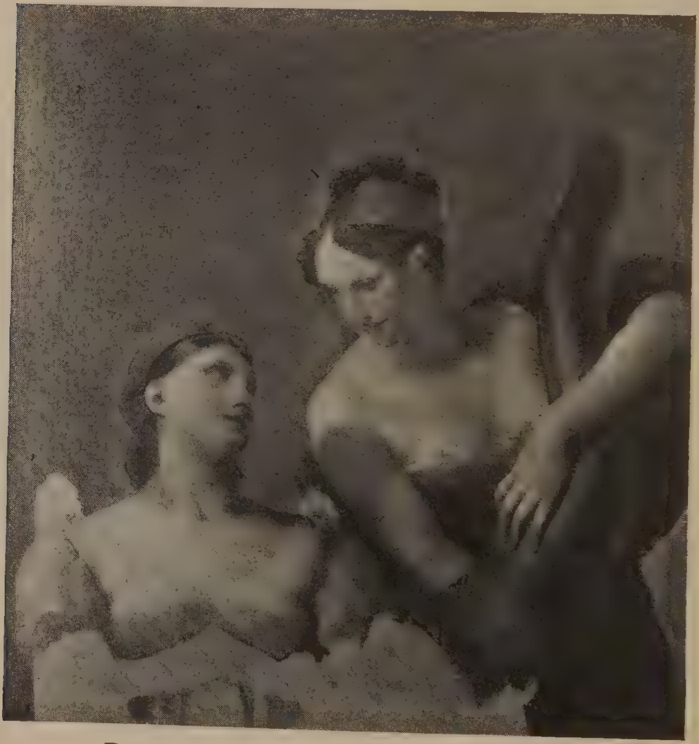
France of the seventeenth century was erecting the intellectual scaffolding of which German music was first to take possession, in order to give the support of the heroes to the voice of the people. Until Wagner, French rationalism will guide German music. Without the architect Descartes, Sebastian Bach would not have come; and Beethoven could not have introduced Rousseau into Occidental passion if Bach had not taught him how to give order to symphonic masses according to the intelligence, lifted up by doubt to a feeling of its reality. The peoples were communing over the heads of the Christian sects. And French thought, in order to vanquish the Catholic theocracy, was borrowing from Protestantism its preoccupation with morality, even as German music, in order to vanquish the Protestant theocracy, was borrowing from Catholicism its architectural genius.

It is doubtless in music that we must look for the pursuit and continuance in the souls of men of the moral upheaval which prepares the death of the ancient theocracies; and the French Revolution stands only as the tragic passage of that upheaval into fact and law. Music is the most universal and the vaguest voice, the one always used by men to rejoin one another when they are most dispersed. It appears in Italy like a despairing appeal when the Renaissance has broken open the sheaf of social energy. When architecture is dead, when sculpture is dying, and painting is reaching its full expansion, music is hardly more than born there. Here is Palestrina, with his great wave rising and descending like a breast, the long sob which does not die away, the swelling voices which call to others, and the more valiant and pitiful hearts which sustain the other hearts. A century passes. The dispersal becomes more pronounced, and only one voice arises: the melody of Monteverde has the quality of the painter's arabesque; it unites into a line as hard and continuous as a sculptured volume the contradictory sentiments of an anarchical crowd, which no collective sentiment can bind together any longer. Another century passes. The despairing eloquence of Arcangelo Corelli is already broken into by strange cries; his line, too tightly strung, breaks in places; he feels that he is not understood. With Marcello, we no longer hear more than a voice of iron, and it awakens no echo. But in other places, other crowds are stirring. Lulli has already carried the Italian soul into France, where Gluck, the German, will be understood. Watteau, the Frenchman of the north, feels the current of hope coming out of Germany, and through the German of the south, Mozart, an infant Hercules of music who trails garlands of flowers through the tones of concerts and balls, there opens to Italian passion the formidable vessel which Bach has just constructed, in which the voices of Händel and of Haydn awaken multiple echoes, and in which there is already the dull rumble of the cry of Beethoven.



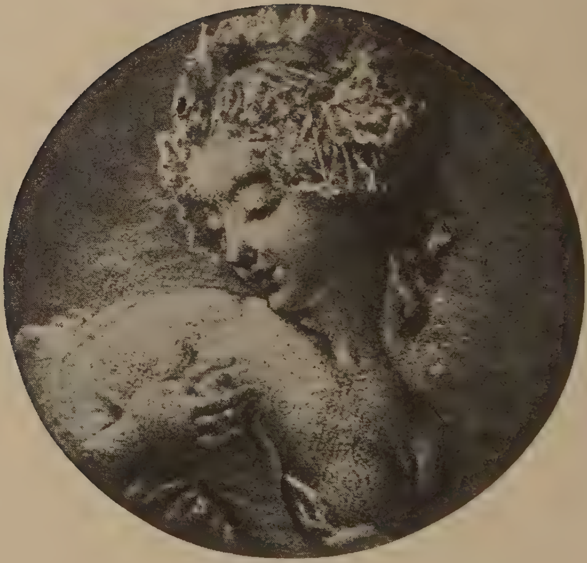
Prud'hon. Joséphine Bonaparte, drawing (*Private collection*).

Between the innermost circle of the *élite* and the people, everything is effaced at that moment. The hero of the spirit sings. The people acts. No halfway art connects them, and none is necessary. All hearts beat together. The passage from one world to another is affirming itself irresistibly in the popular symphony which is embodied by Danton within the country, and which, later, is carried beyond it by Napoleon. But perhaps there is not more than one artist in France who feels that this passage is being accomplished in the spirit of the masters of intelligence by the voice of music alone. Prud'hon is a musician, even if he is unaware of it. In the art of this lover of form, everything occurs with relation to form, in the warm shadow which causes it to recede and which accentuates its depth. If the Revolution manifests itself in David through the stiff tenseness with which he draws himself up as he stands at the brink of the abyss, before the radical overturning of the horizon, it is felt in Prud'hon through the insensible progression with which the luminous surfaces emerge from the obscurity. From the superficial harmonies which Boucher and Fragonard, following Tiepolo and Lemoyne, associated in space by a slight brushing together of the paint, he penetrates to volumes modeled right in the material, and it is in the complicity of his penumbra, where the transition takes place, that Romanticism in painting appears for the first time. Prud'hon has read the *Confessions*, and the *Nouvelle Héloise* also, it is certain, and even *Paul et Virginie*, which he illustrates, but which his insinuating and sensual art dominates with all the force of a passion drawn from sources infinitely more pure than the sentimental wordiness of the *salons* of fashion. He loves the sculptured form which steals away and turns gently, pursued by the moving shadow. As he has the secret of making bosoms breathe, of caressing trembling breasts, and round limbs as they emerge from a kind of twilight, it is his right to give to them, as a frame, the dark woodlands full of brooks, and their murmuring leaves, and their black and slanting trunks. Certainly, he tries to obey David, whom he esteems; and Rome, where he passed several years, watches over him. But it does not touch him. And then he has seen Greuze. And above all he is Prud'hon. The severe profiles are softened by sensual languor, the attitudes of the statues sink as if under a weight, until they become tender gestures and loving abandon. The bosoms of the vestals bear down the folds of the antique robes, and



PRUD'HON. Abundance (*Private collection*).

the arms of the tragic muses are heavy with voluptuousness. The necks of all the women continually swell with the sighs which he seizes on their warm lips; and their eyelids know the pain of waiting for happiness or of seeing it pass. His women have the maternal abandon of those who love deeply and for whom man is always the child. Gluck is still very near to him. And the tender Prud'hon is the last evening of the dream of pleasure, of nostalgia, and of music which Watteau had begun, and which is on the threshold of a dawn bathed in a bloody mist.



FRAGONARD

Landscape

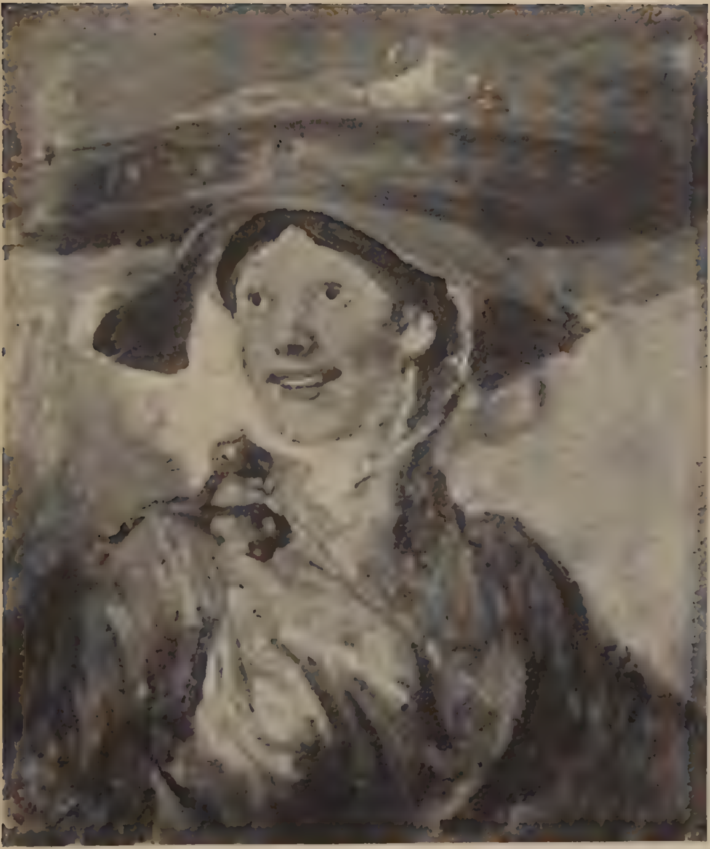
Chapter VI. ENGLAND

I

THE fortress having disappeared—the fortress which is always beautiful, because it is built with a positive end in view—England has no longer an architecture. England has no sculpture: there is too much rain and too much fog, the profiles of the earth are soaked in water, clogged by fields, and clothed with woods and with heather. England has only one century of painting, and the Puritan spirit and the practical spirit are repelled by it and, when it comes, turn it away from its goal.

Here are mighty trees, cascades, granite cliffs, eternal mist, a wild sea everywhere, summer nights like an hallucination when the light of the moon, appearing for a moment among the clouds, bathes ruins and lakes, where the sob of the nightingales rises above the murmur of the leaves, where the ponds reflect the trembling phantom of the branches. . . . The Celt is sensual and mystical, the Saxon dreams out loud. Here were born, from Shakespeare to Byron, from Milton to Shelley, the greatest poets of the world. When aërial space is not sufficiently subtle, and the planet is not sufficiently pronounced in aspect to impose beyond all else the love of colors and of forms, when the world of colors and forms is rich and mysterious, and lacking in that ungrateful and monotonous quality which drives the spirit back to the inner domains of sonorous symbols, and when, added to all this, the crowd possesses a force of accent, and such energy for life and for conquest as it has nowhere else, man's faculty of words is unchained and seizes kingly command. Here is Shakespeare, all the voices of the tempest and of the dawn, the treasures rolled by the sea, the palaces built in the heavens with the tissue of stars offering themselves to the soul to interpret a confession of love, or the anguish of an irresolute man, the terror of a murderer, or the wrath of a king. Here is Milton taking, for the first time since the biblical poems and Michael Angelo, the wild gardens, the flesh of fruits, the flesh of women, and the dust of flowers to express to consciousness the tyranny of God. Here is Byron, raising the damned from their abyss to fire the stars with their fever, and to cradle it upon the ocean. Here is Shelley, each beat of whose heart sends harmonies streaming, like a river whose waters trail the reflections of the Milky Way, and the tremor of plumes and leaves which it has swept along in its course through the woods.

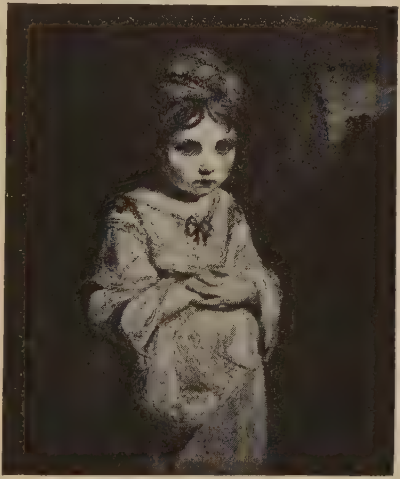
The English soul consoles itself for the too practical activity of Englishmen by constantly widening the spread of its wings. Even English science cannot resign itself to building its monuments impartially. It has to rise higher than the eagle, or else it applies



HOGARTH. The Shrimp Girl (*National Gallery*).

itself to satisfying the material needs of man, and often the man of England. The supreme idea of Newton is a mystic intuition. Beyond the solar system, whose frontiers are not crossed by Copernicus, Kepler, or Galileo, it extends to infinitude the power of reason, and, passing over contradictions of detail which might cause it to stumble, it realizes its harmony with the immutable order of the world. . . . But Bacon assigns to consciousness an immediate and practical purpose; Hobbes builds up his social determinism like a geometer. The merchants organized their material Republic without pity. The Roundheads impose laws of iron upon their moral Republic. There must be expiation for the lyric orgy by which the great sixteenth century, in the Occident, burst the theocratic armor from within, and caused the passion for freedom to rise in the hearts of men. There is only one book—the Bible—as later, for the Jacobins of France, there will be only one example—that of Rome. The theater of Marlowe, of Shakespeare, and of Ben Jonson will be closed. The image will be driven from the cult and swept from the mind. An easy matter. No one understood Holbein when he came here to earn his bread. No one looked at Rubens's dazzling ceilings at Whitehall. Here, anyone who is great must take refuge within his inner life or else outside the country. The imaginary world of Shakespeare permits him to satisfy his whole soul and re-create it each day. Milton is blind, Byron and Shelley, later on, will flee the virtue, the fog, and the cities. When van Dyck arrives, he will work for a king whose head is to be cut off, and for an aristocracy which is to be deposed from power. The crowd does not understand him, the theologian curses him. Charles II must bring back from France easy morals, ordered literature, and improvident politics before painting can appear without effort, as one of the wheels of the new system, and as one of the profound and irrepressible needs of the English people.

And yet the Puritan imprint has sunk in so sharply and the English people is so strong, that the first in date of its painters, the one from whom all the others will come, is the most English of all, and, though he himself is unaware of it, the most Puritan of all. The morals of William Hogarth are not irreproachable, perhaps, but his satire is virtuous. He is a contemporary of the first novelists of the manners and customs of England, and regulates his pace by theirs. Swift encourages him. Fielding congratulates him on following "the cause of righteousness," and considers that his engravings "have their appointed place in every well-kept household." He undertakes sprightly crusades against debauchery, gambling, drunkenness, and the politics of elections, and for the protection of animals. He desires the "happiness of mankind." And his work shows the effects of it. It is encumbered and confused, orchestrated in almost a haphazard manner. One thinks first of the subject, and if there is on the canvas a passage of savory painting, one perceives it only after having had a good laugh. But he has the raciness of the people. He knows London



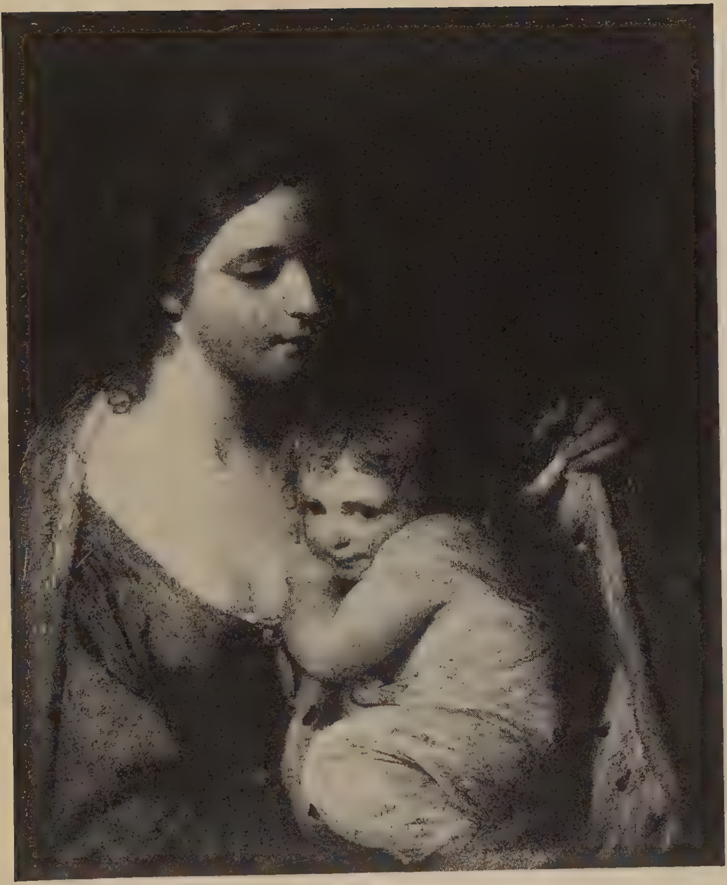
Reynolds. Little Girl (*Wallace collection*).

to its depths. He comes out of them, and he goes back to them. He is an Englishman, and despises everyone who is not an Englishman. The fencing-master, and the grotesque swaggerer, and the ceremonious freak must, of course, be Frenchmen. He has the atrocious raillery and the sad clearness of vision which are the backbone and the atmosphere of the comic genius of his nation. He laughs with violence, in the same way that men get angry. His healthiness will not suffer anyone around him to be in ill health.

Can one say of a painter that he missed his career as a painter when he has, for once in that career, looked on the world as a great painter does? If all English caricature, from Rowlandson to the humorous illustrators of the magazines and of popular prints, comes from him, he painted—doubtless in a few hours—a thing that contains the whole spirit and the whole flower of all English painting. In the splendor of the laugh and of the teeth and of the clear eyes and of the dimples of a girl of the people, her flesh tingling with the health that comes of milk, the juice of meats, of air, and of water—he seized, one day, all the wandering harmonies of this country of moist landscape, and of its cool ocean. The picture is a sudden flash which lights up, which will grow pale, from one painter to another, and then burn out, after the poets of landscape have picked up its silvery trace in the fog and in the heavens.

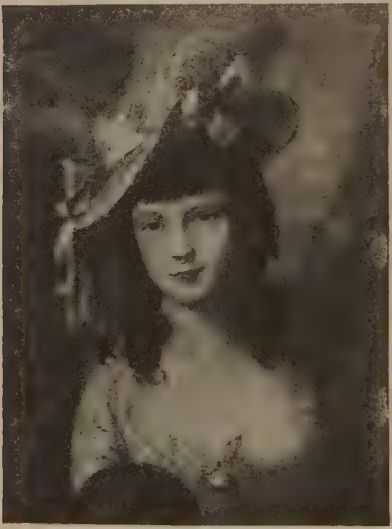
II

A single flash. Before him, no one in England suspected that manner of painting. There had been only van Dyck, and those who succeed Hogarth, with their ease and their careless grace, as if they were representing the climax of a long effort, will not often give



REYNOLDS. The Two Waldegraves (*Chantilly*).

expression to any such fancies, but will rather follow the Fleming. He is easier to understand, more soft and empty, and far less a master of character. He is the master needed by a group evolving outside the essential genius of its race. Here are noble faces, each one a little bit similar to the others, and interchangeable hands emerging from fine clothes. An enriched and distant aristocracy, ignorant of the people, without intellectual connection with the lofty national thought which burned out a hundred years before, are well adapted to love and patronize such an art. They are narrowly practical in their purposes, and meet their need for an ideal with the foreign culture enthroned by the Restoration in its effort to combat the Puritan. They are touched by French fashions and ideas, and when a kind of moral beauty comes to them with the perpetual war, with the continual and brutal expansion in distant lands and on the sea, Reynolds and Gainsborough will have formed the generation of painters needed for their great, comfortable luxury. The whole of English painting gravitates around the peerage, and is created for it, for its women, and for its gardens. Born at the

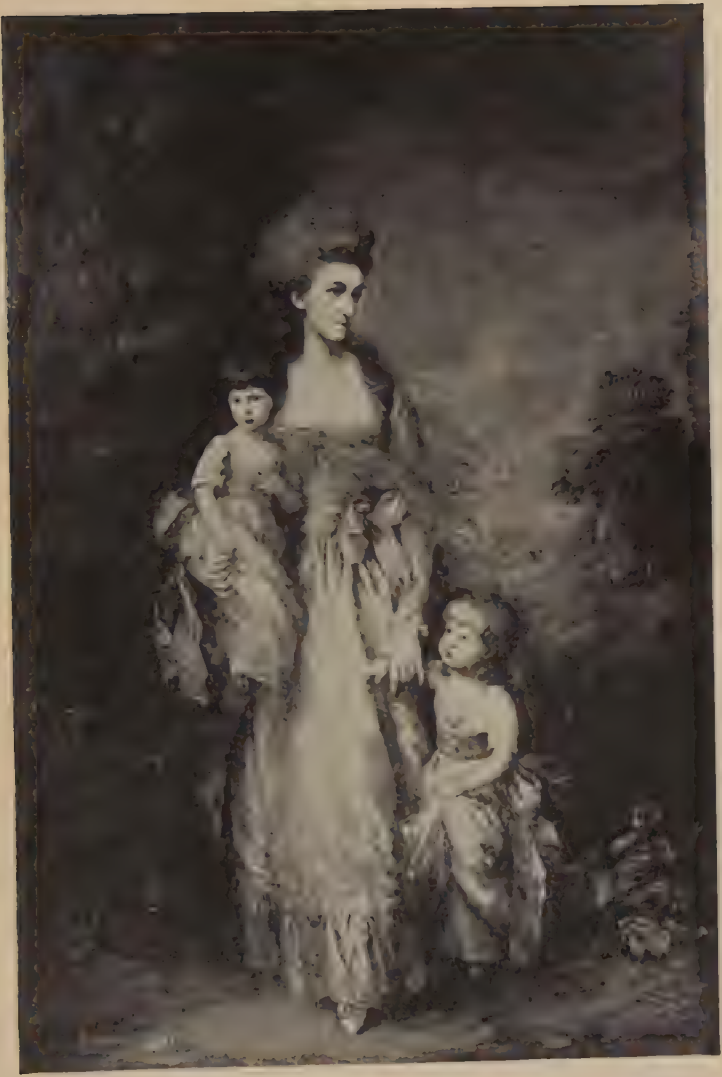


GAINSBOROUGH. Portrait of a Child, detail (*National Gallery*).

moment when the lords gather the fruits of their allegiance and of their privileges, it is only one of its fruits. It resembles the lords, it models itself from them. It does not have to bend to their caprice, it forms a part of their domain, outside of which it would not exist. It is not annexed to them for an hour, it is determined by their needs. The English painter is not, as in France, an artisan still retaining his traditions, but domesticated for a time by the double tyranny of money and of fashion. In France, the painter is a workman of art at the service of the man of society. In England, the painter is a society man who practices painting as an amateur.

And that brings about its inferiority, even to the French painting of the same period—of a secondary order, though it was. It was in England, perhaps, that this century, so little of an artist—save for the music of the Germans—shows itself to be most devoid of creative force. There is not a Watteau, not a Chardin, not a Goya, not even a Tiepolo, perhaps, or a Canaletto. Not only is the intellectual atmosphere, here as in other places, unfavorable to painting, since here, as in other places, everything tends toward criticism, journalism, society correspondence, the literature of information, scientific essays, and moralizing novels, but here, in addition, man is not a painter, or rather he is so in too narrow a sense. When his eye is satisfied, the English painter stops. Not one passes beyond the expression of the superficial harmonies quickly revealed to him by the study of Flemish and Venetian painting, and of which he quite easily finds confirmation in his beautiful, well-washed landscapes and his skies laden with vapor; not one attains the expression of the profound, turning volumes which lead us, little by little, to discover the architecture of the world, and thus the architecture of the mind. In the course of his travels on the Continent, Reynolds was not able to see, in Rembrandt, whom he pillages, and in the Venetians, whom he treats loftily in his Discourses, anything but a creamy and triturated paste, melting tones, and lights with warm shadows, in which reddened gold plays over the thick whites. He treats his admirable gifts as a painter like frippery to crumple with the tips of the fingers. Under that crust of painting, the form is soft and spongy, like a fruit swollen with water. The material of the flesh and the structure of the bones are similar to those of the dresses. And as soon as one has pierced the artificial patina, the work sounds hollow.

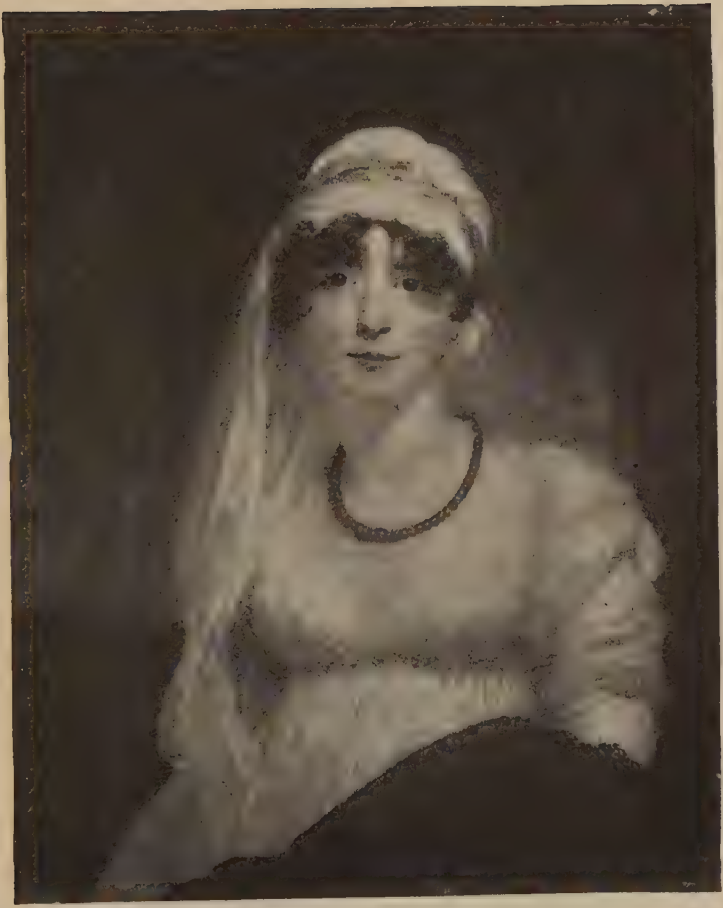
After him, all the painters resemble one another. A little more charming or a little more disdainful, a little more animated or a little more cold, a little more savory or a little more insipid, a little more graceful or more awkward, all are empty and facile; and the delicate gray harmonies which some, like Raeburn, harmonize with the dresses and the neckcloths of taffeta, of silk, or of muslin, with space, and with powdered hair, cannot cause us to forget a wearisome monotony of attitudes, a quality of pigment like pasteboard or like plaster, and form without a skeleton, without muscles, and without density. The fall is as rapid as the effort to rise was easy in appearance and factitious in reality. The charming color engraving everywhere current at that time is perhaps the thing which best interprets the spirit of English plastics, which, after all, sees color only as a means of giving its bloom to the home, and of there transforming into cool and comfortable harmonies the woods, the fields, and the skies of the country, its tall, elegant women, their beautiful horses, their hunting dogs and pet dogs, all bathed in clear light and the open air. But all the portrait painters, Romney, Raeburn, Hoppner, and Opie, sink, step by step, when one thinks of the initiators,



GAINSBOROUGH. Portrait of Mrs. Mordey and her Children (*Dulwich*).

Reynolds, Hogarth, and van Dyck. Lawrence, the last to arrive, is, as soon as he gets past his sketch, which is sometimes charming, only a dispenser of cold syrups.

In this group, Gainsborough alone retains a certain bearing. His psychological sense of the portrait, which the study of the French painters of his time has permitted him to affirm and to extend, makes of him a nobler amateur, one who lives in the provinces, apart from the others; he is a man who loves his art. If there is, in this England of the eighteenth century, rebellious within and conquering abroad, carrying on, along the same front, the satire of Swift when it lifts its mirror to its face, and the practical epic of Defoe when its eye follows its sailors and its traders, if there is some aristocratic retreat for noble modesty and for pride, it is in him that we must seek it. Whether the lord leads the soldiers of the oligarchy to the Continent, or, in Parliament, enters the practical debates of the merchants and the legists, his wife remains an object of luxury which he keeps for himself in the majestic frame of the castles and the parks. Blue of the thickets, gray of the clouds, and space of humid silver, all the delicate and distant beings who cross the monotonous backgrounds which you form have really the air of belonging to a race unknown before him, and which no one will see again when he shall have ceased to be. If those ethereal robes were torn, if the dulled tones of the crossed neckcloths, the high, powdered coiffures, the laces, the blue ribbons, and the scarfs of pink pearl were to mingle their impalpable dust with the ashes of the airy harmonies which always accompany them, we should doubtless see, appearing for a second and instantly fleeing beneath the trees, tall, chaste huntresses who would not reappear. For the first and the last time in England, where all music and all painting pass through the heart of the lyric poets before reaching us, a little

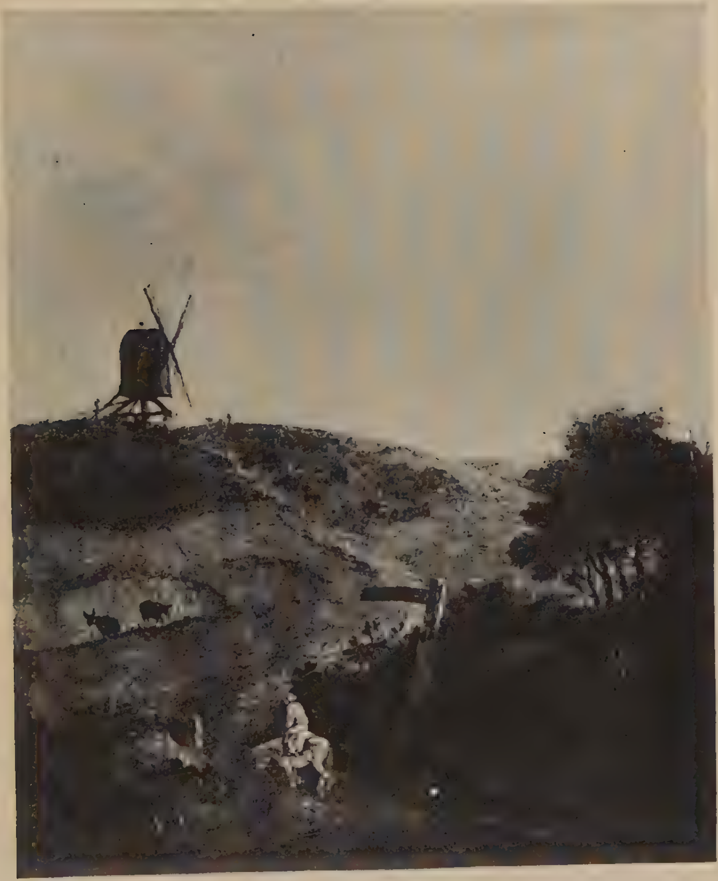


John Hoppner. Lady with a Coral Necklace
(*Metropolitan Museum, New York*).

undefined music passes into painting itself. Gainsborough seems to be the only one really to have heard, resounding in England, the sonorous poem that Händel had brought there from Germany and which cradled his contemplative life. In his melancholy, there is a little of the grand solemnity, and in the gentle and delicate honesty of his vision, a certain echo of the mystic positivism of the old musician.

Unfortunately, the quality of his meditation on nature is not on the same height as his instincts and his intentions as an artist. Like the others, he is forced to obey the suggestions of his country, to which its living verdure, its limpid coolness of tone, its long undulations covered by grasslands and by trees too well nourished, perhaps, too richly endowed, give neither the firmness of geological construction nor the infinite movement of the air which are both necessary to the formation of the great painter. He is forced to follow the suggestions of his epoch, the one least spontaneously English in the whole history of the English, with its universal criticism, its negation of all that is most distinctly English in the English soul (the writer imitates France, and Garrick corrects Shakespeare), and the systematic sensualism of its philosophers, which cuts one of the wings of lyricism and condemns plastics never to go beyond sensation. He is forced to yield to the temperament of his race, which, as soon as it abandons itself to poetic flight, transposes all the matter borrowed from the vast world, to realms of sentiment in the mind, where the word reigns as master but where the architecture of form lacks a base, and where sculpture and painting vacillate and whirl, like a tuft of smoke at the mouth of a volcano.

Thus English painting dies of that which causes the English poet to live and reign in the imagination of men. If the English novel of manners and customs justifies the

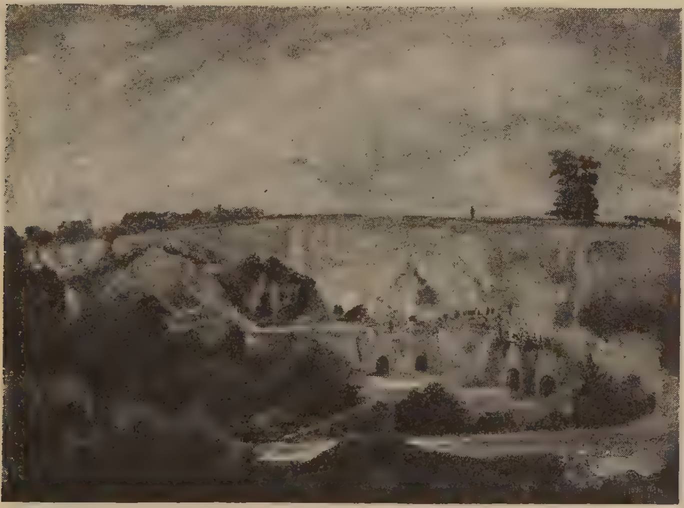


Old Crome. The Windmill (*National Gallery*).

enthusiasm of Diderot, the English people, through its love for Greuze, shows that it understood painting as badly as did Diderot—who understood it so well as soon as he consented to consider it according to the painters. English sentimentalism disheartens itself by borrowing the language of painting, in which reverie and tears have no place. Reynolds could pass for a great painter —thanks to his portraits of men especially, sometimes sturdy and broad enough to give a living idea of the soldier, the sailor, or the despot of letters of that time—were his soul not that of a shopgirl grown insipid by foolish dreaming. Hence his cats and dogs bedecked with ribbons, his chubby little girls with cherries at their ears; hence the eyes he paints swimming with tears, the clasped hands, and the faces pink with shame hidden under round and pretty arms. It is a painting that causes old ladies to weep and young girls to sigh; impotent, ambiguous, and perverse, it trails the mantle of Rembrandt through streams of perfumery and of caramel sauce.

III

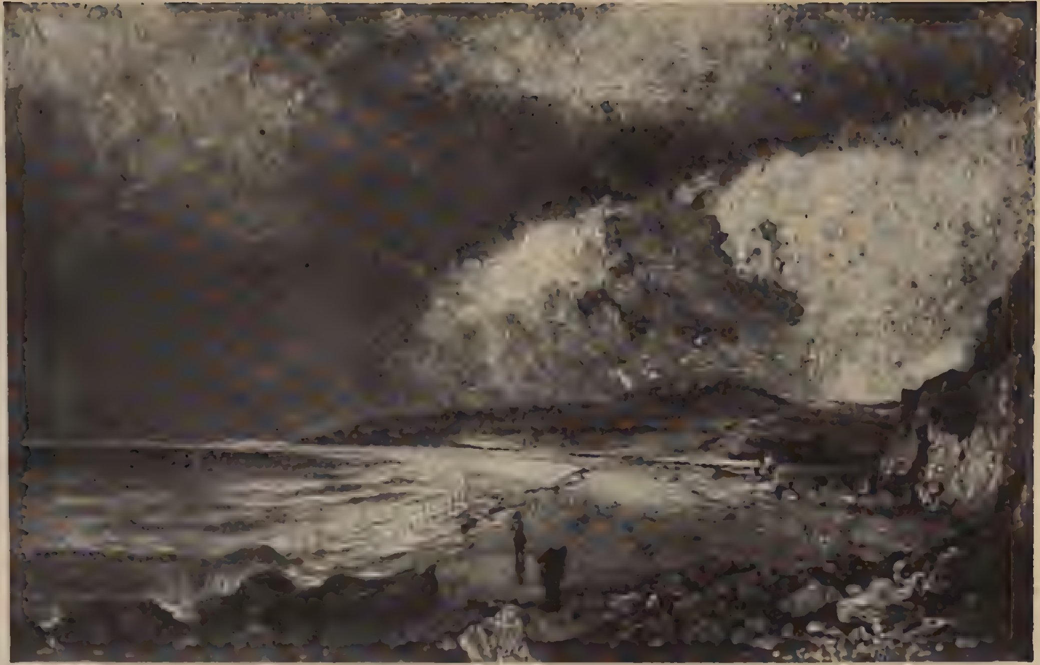
What remains of all those elegant painters who spent almost as much time in writing about painting—with much competence, distinction, and sagacity, it is true—as in trying to attain the profound purpose of painting, like those whom they imitated, men who had never written about it—Rubens, Rembrandt, Titian, Veronese, and Velasquez? There remains the superficial, but sincere and clear-sighted love for color of a century during which, since Watteau, not a painter in western Europe, save Chardin, Goya, and the last of the Venetians understood the voluptuousness of color. There remains an effort, insufficient but unanimous, to bring the art of painting back to its sources, which are space, light, shadow, and the tangle and play of reflections on forms in movement. There is a progressive reconciliation with the real trees, the real flowers, the real grasses of the country, and the real clouds in the sky, at the hour when all the littérateurs, all the artists, and all the philosophers of the Continent, caught in the current of fashionable and ideological scene-painting, no longer saw anything but artificial, weak, and sentimental symbols.



Constable. Landscape (*Private collection*).

The lordly castles, which the painter follows as his model, are buried under ivy and ampelopsis at the center of those great parks which William Kent, during the first third of the century, was designing as a reaction against the fashion for Italian or French gardens. The dryness of southern Europe, the canalizations which it necessitates, the basins, the jets of water, the thinness, the well-determined form of the cypresses and the umbrella-shaped pines, the aloes, and all the somber plants which grow in the sun and the dust, impose on the mind a clear and sharply cut image which French rationalism was to carry to its highest point of stylization and arrangement. Here, on the contrary, there is almost eternal rain, a soil into which the roots burrow deeply to carry nourishment to the luxuriant masses of leaves; and here is the forest, its dense leafage gathering every drop of water that comes with the fog; here are wide-spreading boughs dividing into many branches; here are enormous black trunks covered with moss and lichens. Disorder imposes itself, and savage strength, and verdure, heavy with water. Amid smooth lawns, as lustrous as a deep velvet, the majestic trees seem to absorb the silence. The majority of them are isolated in groups, like peaceful giants. Some of them trail their mantle of branches upon the ground. Leaves fall on the greensward, and the birds that drink and go marauding there whirl by in swarms. Flower beds appear like carpets cast here and there to affirm, amid the pantheistic disorder and the impassable vigor of the world, the presence of calm and of will. Man imposes nothing on Nature; he takes care that she shall follow, with his aid, the hints which she gives him. From winter to summer, he enhances the effect of the obedient multitude of the plants and the brooks which await the decisions of the wind and the sun in order to change their appearances.

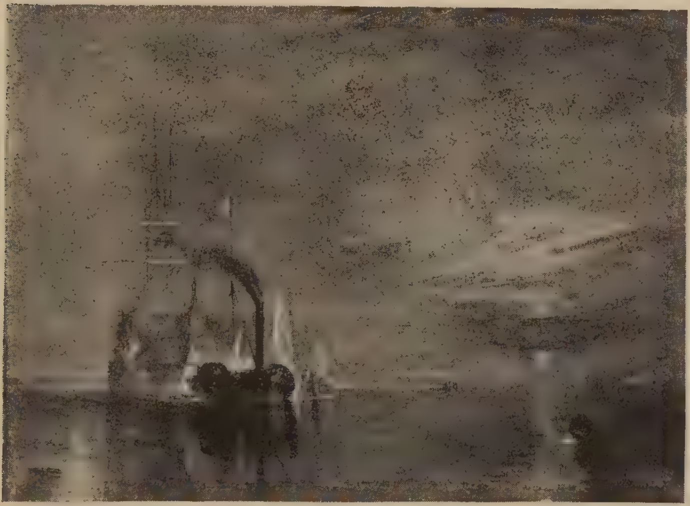
Milton, in "Paradise Lost," sings of the natural garden. The natural garden is the most powerful expression of the domestic style of the English. In France and in Italy it expresses an artistic aristocracy, in their cult of intellect and of design, and within these limits it stops short. In England it originated with a practical aristocracy, which extends, by way of the collective wealth of the country, to all the men of the city, even to the poor, for whom the garden remains



CONSTABLE. Weymouth Bay (*Louvre*).

open and for whom its lawns are accessible; it submits to daily contact with herds of sheep and oxen, whose wool and whose meat clothe and feed the nation. Outside the flights of imagination expressed in its lyric power over words, far from its violent trading and its practical destiny, England carries its effort for æsthetic organization into everything which assures comfort and repose to man—the garden, the house with its furnishing, its clean and almost bare rooms where nothing useless is dragged in, its definite solid furniture, its flowered windows, and its walls of red brick or of white painted wood. With the work of art among other peoples, political and domestic styles are to be renewed incessantly, but like the work of art again, they preserve, through revolutions and conquest, a traditional character. There is little or nothing for the mind. Everything is for the body and the soul, and their health and their well-being. Morals, sport, religion, and business are in complete agreement.

The art of the English landscape was born of that indifference of almost all Englishmen to that which is not virginal nature, suppleness of muscles, and rectitude of morals. It already appears in the gardens which Gainsborough opens wide behind his somewhat distant apparitions of great ladies and of blond children. Indeed, he has often seen a romantic landscape, suns setting over pools, and rays of light piercing the clouds after summer rains. At the decline of the most skeptical century in history, the English soul finds itself even by the aid of painting, which expresses it insufficiently. It waxes enthusiastic over the novelists of poverty, and over peasant poets. It has such a need of nature and of reverie that it listens with exaltation to a literary impostor because he claims to have rediscovered the barbaric poems of the first men of its fjords and its mountains in their struggle with the voices and the phantoms of the ocean, of the storm, and of the fog. The Revolution in France arouses those who are falling asleep, and renders feverish those who awaken. Byron and Shelley flee England out of hatred for her commercial and bigoted positivism. Wordsworth takes refuge on the shores of a solitary lake, where he will no longer hear anything but the fall of the rain and the cry of the water birds, where he will no longer see anything but the forest on the hill slope, the mist in the hollows, and the universal awakening of silent life at each return of the springtime.



Turner. The Fighting Téméraire (*National Gallery*).

It is at this moment that the English painters, leaving Lawrence, the most mediocre among them, to continue their tradition of fashion into the heart of the nineteenth century, scaled the walls of the parks to explore the countryside and to consider the sky at their ease. Old Crome, whose father was a weaver, never even left the part of the country where he was born, and, like Burns, alone, without guide and without companion, crossed the threshold of the mystery of the world. The broad English land, with its covering of damp earth, its soil kneaded of clay and water, is contained entire in each one of his visions. With earth on the soles of his shoes and a stick in his hand, he goes over it like a peasant who loves it for the difficulties it gives him and for the bread that he knows how to get from it; the blood comes to the surface of his shaven cheeks, as the mist enters his nostrils. That is all; his painting expresses nothing more; but at that moment, when the Hollanders are silent, when the French and the Italians—Vernet, Moreau, Hubert Robert, Canaletto, and Guardi—are writing their careful pages about cities and stylized ruins, and mythological countries illumined by a pale reflection from the sun of Claude Lorrain, when Wilson, himself an Englishman, cannot tear himself from their seductive domination, this is a revolution. The odors of the earth, all its aspects determined by the weather and the season, the shadows which the rain clouds carry across it, and the darkening caused by the wind blowing over the earth and by the approach of evening, all of that together enters human sentiment, with Crome.

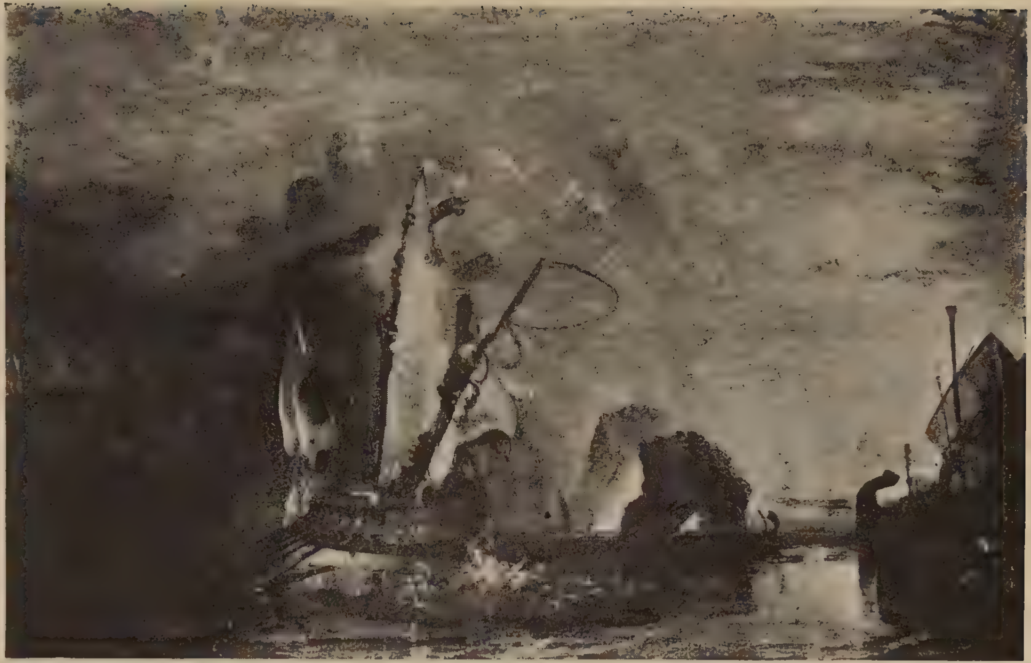
A landscape when it is painted contains no transposition, especially when imagination adds nothing to its effects. One must look at it. One cannot describe it. The greatest achievement of English landscape, in the work of Old Crome, Cotman, Bonington, and Constable, above all, furnishes Delacroix with certain of the technical elements of the lyricism which animated French painting for eighty years and which has not yet died out. When Delacroix saw Constable's landscapes, the year when he was painting the "Massacre of

Scio," he repainted his immense canvas in four days. He discovered in them a principle, that of the division of colors, almost realized by instinct by Veronese, by Vermeer of Delft, and by Chardin, but whose fecundity Constable, with the severity and the thoroughness of the Englishman, consciously demonstrated in his works. Near by one sees reds, oranges, greens, blues, and yellows, a confused mingling of juxtaposed colors, without apparent relationship with the distant coloration which they claim to imitate in nature, and the well-defined form which they try to evoke. From afar, one sees the great sky, washed and limpid, where the pearly clouds sail like ships; one sees the watery veil ever suspended and trembling above the plain; one sees the blue haze growing denser and stretching away to the distance. Here is the infinite countryside, in England so rich and green after the rain, that it seems as if spread out on a giant palette, pearly with drops of water. Everything, the thick greensward, the deep mass of the oaks, the red and white houses appearing amid green copses, space with its azure and silver, and the flowers sprinkled with dew, everything shines and trembles and scintillates, like a world rising into the daylight at the coolest and the most transparent of the hours. To Constable the scenes of his country spoke the words, "I am the resurrection and the life." And his soul plunged into these scenes as the fairest woman's body plunges into the water.

It is when Constable arrives at that transparence that he touches great painting most nearly, and perhaps he is a greater painter when he works with water-color than when he tries to render, by means of the oil so lavishly used by Reynolds and his group, the moist and glistening splendor of English landscape. Water-color, by its slightness of body, its liquid freshness, and its incapacity for rendering oversubtle shades, is the material best suited to the Englishmen. Constable owes to it his most luminous notes, Turner his most translucent jewels, and Bonington uses it with such mastery that he reaches the point of incorporating with his oil painting—blond, ambered, and accented by reds and greens which seem to die out, little by little as if under a layer of water—something of its gleam, and to offer a reflection of it to the flaming and funereal color of Delacroix. Oil-paints, on the contrary, are almost always dangerous for the English painters. The uniform splendor of their atmosphere does not harmonize well with that complex material, of a profundity so rich and agitated. They become victims of it. They desperately insist upon rendering with it their sky laden with vapors and, at the same time, the transparence of the air so frequently revealed to them by the sun after the rain. They triturate it, they thicken it, deprive it of its savor by trying to make it too savory, and by becoming exclusively absorbed in the study of it, get caught in its creamy mud, and confuse the pearl and the silver which they have gathered from the air. English landscape, even with Constable, often sinks into the heavy cookery in which Reynolds left almost all his gifts.

IV

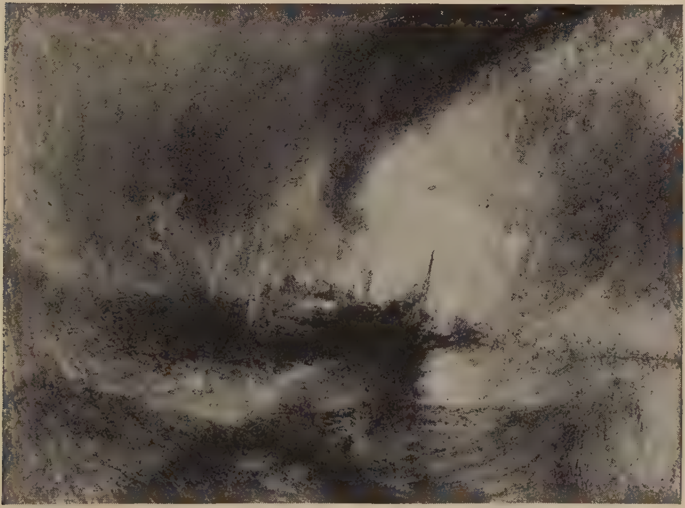
Turner is the last victim, and the most illustrious, of this need to force the language of painting, to which Rembrandt and Velasquez give wings and a soul by permitting painting to follow their objective vision, and to unite that vision with their imaginary world. His desire certainly goes beyond, and far beyond, the equanimity of sentiment and the pacific positivism of the other English painters. He was almost the only one to see the sulphur sun shining at the depth of the



TURNER. Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus (*National Gallery*).

mist. It was for him alone that the livid river showed itself through the trailing smoke. He surprised great phantoms in the fog and the rain, towers of brick and of old stone, ships, black chimneys, and red lanterns piercing the confused darkness, as a muffled cry issues from a great murmur, only to go back into it the instant afterward. He felt the sea and the light of the tropics enter the somber city with the tarred hulls and the sails of the vessels, with the wandering flight of the sea gulls, and with the phosphorescent slime, and mingled with their vanished wake, the indistinct echoes of receding streets, of docks, of sinister places, and of parks bathed in emerald, full of trees and of herds. And by an incredibly gallant lyric effort he tried to transpose this turbid and splendid material to an imaginary world where he mounted so high that the rarefied air could not sustain his flight.

He seems like a bird wheeling about in the lightning, intoxicated by electric storms and blinded by the flashes. Wherever he is on the planet and in history, whether he voyages with Shakespeare across ancient and Romanesque Italy, whether he plunges with van Goyen into the illuminated mist, or whether he visits, with Homer, the old heroic universe where the flame of the volcanoes and the song of the sirens lead Ulysses in his wanderings over the ocean, whether, suffocated by the wind, and drenched in salt and spray, he joins in the rescue of men shipwrecked on a fishing boat, or whether he accompanies Nelson amid the thunder of the cannon and the smoke, with the flags flying and the great sails torn, everywhere that sea water, and the water of heaven, and the sun mingle, he saw, in a land of supernatural legend, an aërial palace borne by the clouds, reddening in twilights and dawns which he confronted, flooded with bloody shadows and with coruscations of opals, sapphires, and rubies. One day he fixed his eyes on the setting sun of Claude. And thenceforward he cared to see no one else. The solid architectures have become translucent specters behind the fantastic fog, which permits the English country to show through only as furtive apparitions, supernatural at times, when the moon rises, or when the evening light, piercing the watery veil, where it is partly torn, shows the top of a tower suspended in the clouds, the turning beam of a searchlight, or the dark and flaming globe that sinks little by little. Everything becomes unreal and distant, like that water where Claude's sun, before disappearing, leaves its trail of liquid purple. It alone reigns from dawn to darkness, filling the world and filling history, bursting and scattering over them in explosions of blood and flame.

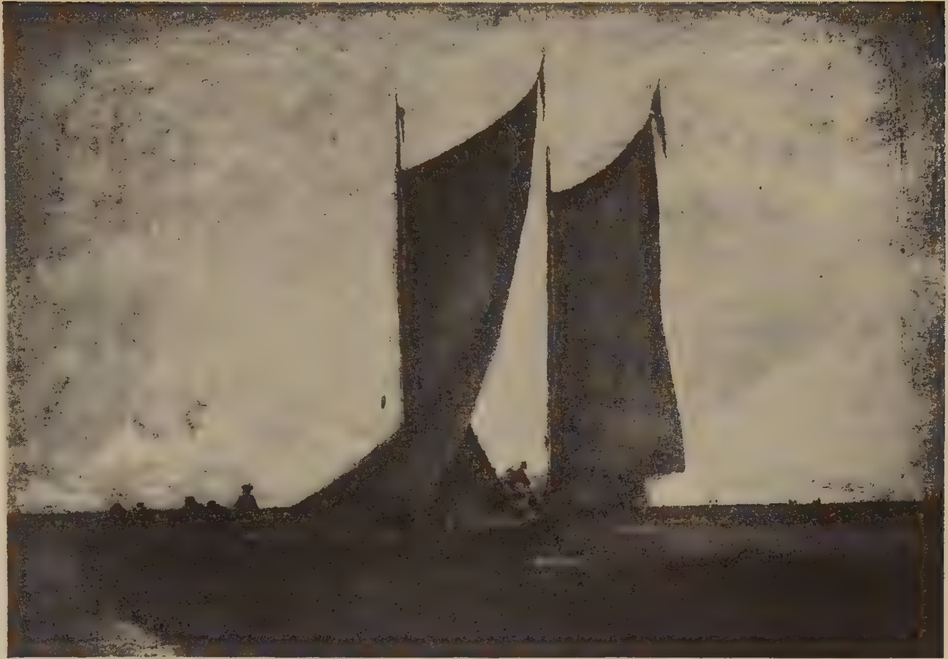


Turner. The Snowstorm (*London*).

The superficial harmonies on which the English painters, since the time of van Dyck, had been expending their virtuosity, were to find their consummation in that strange art of Turner's, which marks the definitive separation of form from color, and the flight of painting into space alone, isolated from all material support, from every visible volume, from every deep bond with the universe of the senses. In reality, that sky and that water, confusedly mingling and seething in the incandescent flame, conceal an obvious coldness of the senses, a complete impotence to understand and supply an equivalent for the trunk and the intermediate branches which forever connect and render sensible, for one another and through one another, the roots of mankind and the perfume of its spirit. Turner masks the indigence of his color under fireworks. The light blinds him. He no longer sees anything but the light. Everything that it illuminates has disappeared. By itself, miracle that it is, it avenges the forgotten earth and the misunderstood heaven. The great harmonic unity of the world crumbles in places and wavers everywhere. Veiled by these gems, broken by these reflections of imaginary fires, the soil loses its consistency, the air thickens, that which is hard becomes fluid, that which is fluid becomes compact, the planes go flying, the values are jumbled, and the disunited universe floats like a luminous smoke torn to shreds by the wind. The poetic emotion and sentiment, superior, doubtless, to the means of expression, evaporate almost entirely, and no longer impress any save those who have not learned to understand the language of painting. Turner demonstrates both the lyric grandeur of the English soul and the impotence of English painting to communicate it.

V

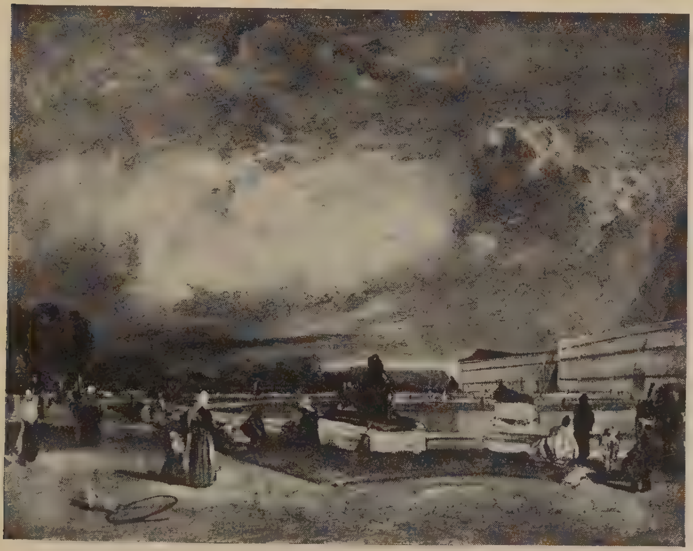
This whole art from van Dyck, its initiator, to the pre-Raphaelites, moves between two reefs, which it



COTMAN. Fishing Boats (*National Gallery*).

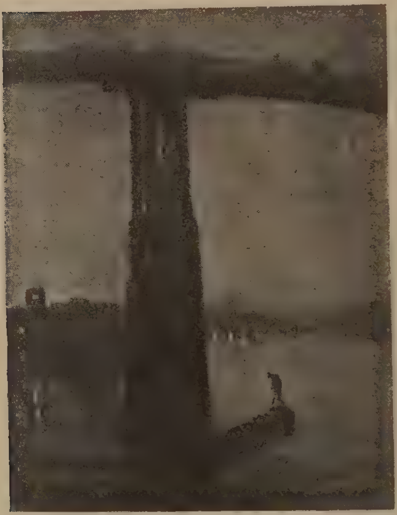
strikes against alternately, without ever succeeding in avoiding both completely: the insufficiency of the form and the tenacity of a poetic sentiment which words alone could express. With Reynolds, with Gainsborough, with Raeburn, with Hoppner, and with Opie, the richness of the color manages to conceal the void which it covers, and makes us forget the poverty of the sentiment in which English lyricism, when turned aside from its path, is swallowed up. But Ruskin arrives, and tears contemporary painters from their worldly courses, to cast himself, with them, upon the primitives of Italy, and to exhaust himself in resuscitating a dead soul—succeeding only in scattering upon its tomb the artificial flowers of a poetic sentiment which still fails to comprehend its means. An incredible misunderstanding! He preaches ingenuousness, and is followed only by liars. This time the repulse is far more complete and far more manifest than at the time of Reynolds, the virtuoso. When the English were following the Venetians or the Flemings, who are painters above all, their gift of color, at least, could expand. When they follow the Florentines, they forget their gift of color, and try researches in line, for which they are not fitted. The reasons for the check sustained by English painting are all to be found in that impotence to construct in depth, which drives it either to the false step of wrecking itself against form, or that of seeking in color and in literature its development and its purpose.

The English soul is not plastic. Painting demands a faculty for objective generalization which is not called forth either by the activities characteristic of Englishmen or by their surroundings. That power of meticulous and direct observation which distinguishes them and which renders their novelists, their actors, and their clowns incomparable, raises the obstacle between great painting and themselves which is most difficult to overcome. If the Anglo-Saxons are the foremost illustrators and caricaturists of the world, it is precisely because their observation of detail, of action, and of character excludes the faculty of embracing, in their ensemble, the great expressive surfaces and the essential volumes. The peoples of painters and of sculptors have neither the gift of illustrating books, nor that of gathering up into a stroke or a point the detail which fixes the dominant note of a race, of a profession, of a gesture, or a temperament. Among such peoples the Japanese alone possess the gift, and their whole art, precisely, has been, since archaic times, leaning toward the spirit of caricature, and flowing into it.



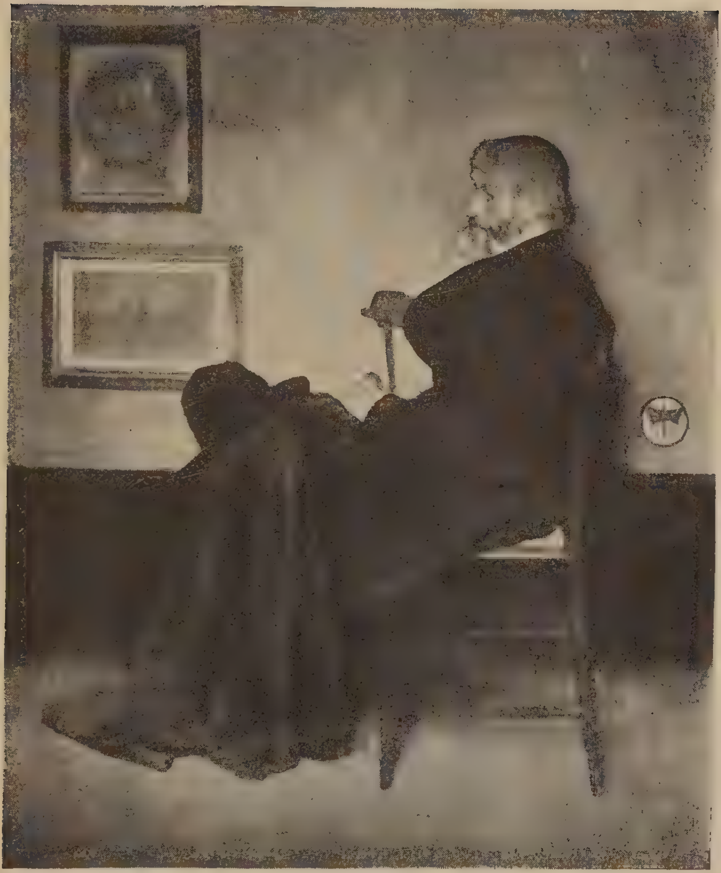
Bonington. The Park of Versailles (*Louvre*).

That faculty, which the Englishman has for observing and describing, is transported entire into the external characteristics of his painting, which, at bottom, has never been, except for Constable, more than imitation. It is in part responsible for that museum art which, for more than a century, has raged over Europe. and which consists in giving to fresh paint the appearance of the smoked and rancid paint of the great masters of oils, an error into which Reynolds was forever falling, although he pointed out its gravity to his pupils, and against which the French, from Delacroix to the Impressionists, will not cease to struggle. A picture by Rembrandt must have flamed like a tropical landscape—with fruits of dark gold, flowers of scarlet, and birds of topaz and of fire—perceived through a silvery haze, or through the russet light in some poor home. A canvas by Veronese, if we were to see it again in its original freshness, would doubtless make the boldest colorist seem timid and sad. When new, it streamed with flame. Even in the shadow, it must have been resplendent and have illuminated everything.



WHISTLER. Battersea Bridge (*Tate Gallery*).

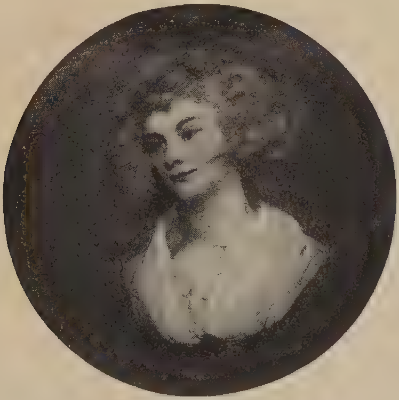
The English artist, one must confess, imitates with such perfection, and produces work of such close resemblance—the cathedral in the Middle Ages, and painting, for the last two hundred years—that it is capable of giving the illusion of original force. Never



Whistler. Thomas Carlyle (*Glasgow*).

were noncreators "artistic" to this point. Never have counterfeit masterpieces been produced with equal skill. Reynolds draws upon the Venetians and Rembrandt, Gainsborough upon van Dyck, the early Turner upon Claude Lorrain, and the result of their study of the earlier masters is something incomparably better than a servile copy or a successful imitation. They resemble those virtuosi of the piano, the violin, and the violoncello who conjure forth from silence the soul of the masters of music, and with it the acclamations of the public. Later, it is true—and I have said why—Ruskin's disciples fail. Burne-Jones is only a sentimental Mantegna entangled with a Botticelli infected by Puritanism. Rossetti shelters his chlorosis under the ægis of the Platonic æsthetes. Watts produces a learned but cold mingling of Michael Angelo, Sodoma, and Titian with the precursors of Raphael. Stevens in turn enters with perfect ease into the garments of Michael Angelo, and breathes the tempest of the Last Judgment and of the Creation into an English hunting horn. The last to arrive of the Anglo-Saxon painters, who moreover violently reacts against pre-Raphaelism, Whistler, in his irresolute flights from the Japanese to Velasquez, and from Courbet to the Impressionists, succeeds at least in keeping the virtuosity of his race away from the danger of form, in bathing subtle harmonies in mystery and fog, and in surprising phantoms in them, and trembling lights. He is the prince of amateurs. He "arranges" with sagacity his grays, his blacks, and his pinks. One step more and the art of Veronese and of Rubens will empty into the modern print and into the desire to please the milliners and dressmakers.

No matter. The intention of English art and the effort made by its painters to express their too narrow vision has resounded over all the great painting which has come after them. Constable, the least incomplete of them, transmitted to Delacroix a part of his science; Turner, the most enterprising of them, liberated through his revolt, the successors of Delacroix. Later on, Ruskin, despite his incapacity for loving the forces of the present day, saw that the machine was crushing the workman, the artist of the people, that utilitarian liberalism was rendering life ugly, and that the critical and scientific mind was killing living sensation. And if French romanticism attained, through sculpture and painting, one of the essential moments of the spirit, it owes it as much to the poets and painters of England as to German music, and to the idealistic and warlike expansion of the Revolution.



ROMNEY. The Parson's Daughter
(*National Gallery*).

Paris

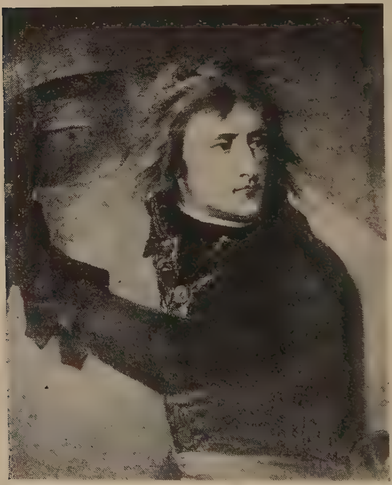
Chapter VII. ROMANTICISM AND MATERIALISM

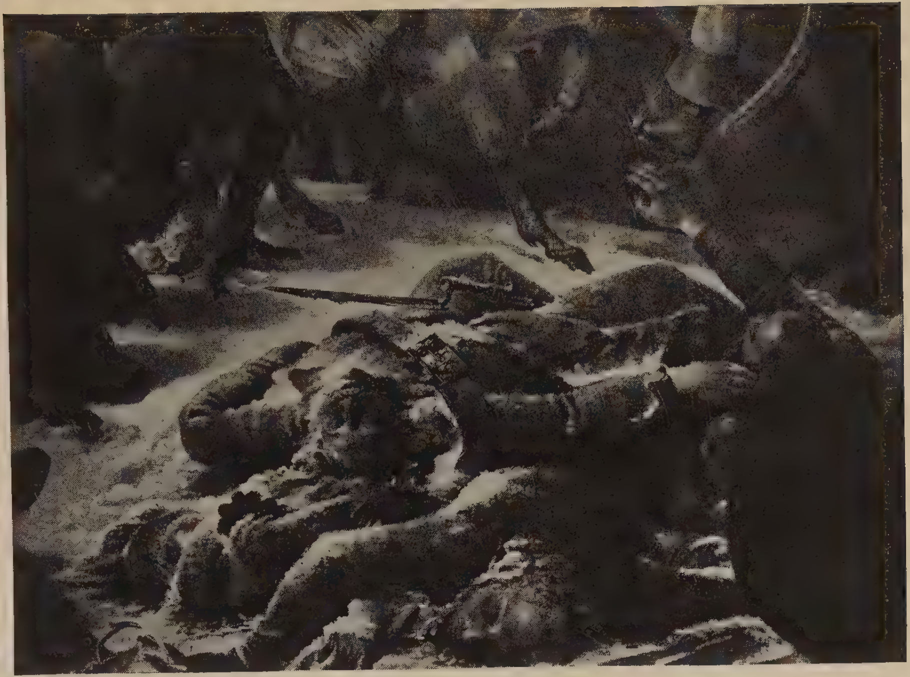
I

WHEN the nineteenth century opens, two forces sustain the world—German thought and the French Revolution. Outside of these, in political Germany, Russia, England, Italy, and Spain, everything is confusion, irresolution, sordid interest, stammering, stagnation, or half-sleep. And in France itself, the activity is too powerful for a dawn of the spirit. With the voice of Lamarck stifled, there is, in the Occident, but one thought, that of Kant; one word, that of Goethe; one cry, that of Beethoven. The only man who replies to them, the only one whose imagination is sufficiently vast to give to action the grand face of the dream, the inner order sufficiently master of itself to assemble into a living symphony all hearts—which are happy in their obedience, the mind sufficiently imperious and rapid to stamp strategic marches and the movements of armies with the continuity of line and the harmonious grouping of mass which define a picture, effaces all, in France, who around him attempt to exist by themselves, and makes demi-gods of all who, by habit, are the most humble of men. Moreover, Beethoven is vexed but admires, Goethe understands and acquiesces, Byron flies in the wake of the lightning, Goya grinds his teeth under the hot iron, but, to gain his victory, rises still higher. The rumblings of the thunder will not die down for a century; they will unite the fragments of the peoples, will break the last bonds of the Middle Ages, and will plunge into the soul of the great pessimists of Europe, Chateaubriand, Stendhal, Schopenhauer, Delacroix, Wagner, Dostoievski, and Nietzsche, the image of the only power, since the power of Christ, capable of giving direction to the world. Napoleon the poet, leading the aroused crowds, determines the character of the century, and, if he drains the peoples of their blood, he injects such a ferment into their souls that they seem to date from him.

A romanticist through his original culture, his love for Rousseau, for Goethe, and for the Ossianic poems, through his need to turn his eyes toward the Orient, toward Egypt, toward India—the whole Empire of the sun, a romanticist through his great, pitiless dream, which handles multitudes and souls like lights and shadows on a surface to be sculptured, through his violent lyricism which precipitates conquest on the heels of desire, and through his vision of the final nothingness, which causes him to go through life with passion alone as his object, and fatality as his law, he unchains romanticism. The mothers curse him. But their womb trembles from the moment when he appears on the horizon. Every man who will be great in France, during the century—Corot, Vigny, Delacroix, Michelet, Balzac, Hugo, Berlioz, and Daumier—to speak only of artists, and who is there that counts between such a man and the artists?—is born, and grows up between the Italian Iliad of 1796 and the hour when he reaches his summit.

When they attain maturity, the sentimentalism of Rousseau has ripened in all hearts; Chateaubriand brings into literature the art of the Middle Ages, the Orient, the forest, the virgin rivers, and legendary Christianity; Madame de Staël brings the unknown soul of the north, with its metaphysical torment, and with its vertiginous need for color, for the exception, and for the vague intoxication of religion; and the whole of literature rushes upon its course of lyric passion, along which the individual, indifferent to everything which is not himself, surrenders himself to the torrent of the forces and of the eternal images of the universe and of love. The stamp of Catholicism, and the reaction of form and of desire against the abstract rationalism of the preceding century are of but little importance. By its capacity for passion, by hurling itself with its wild exaltation into the conquest of the

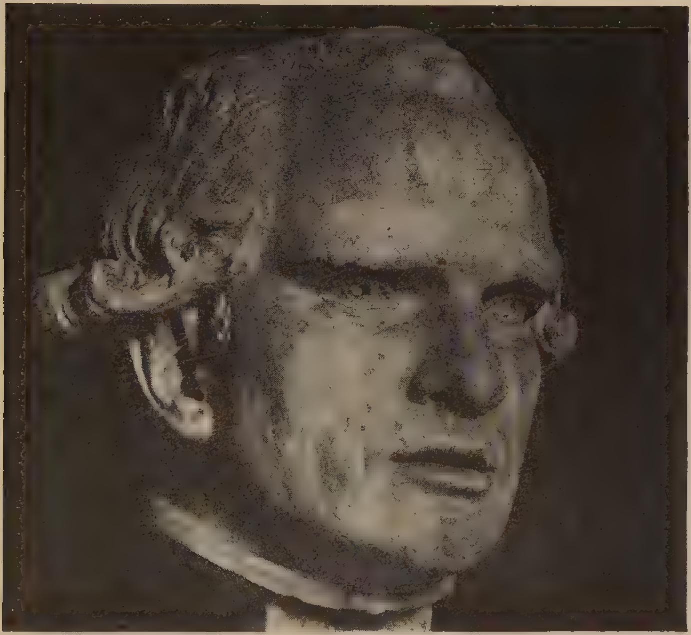

Gros. Bonaparte at Arcola (*Louvre*).



GROS. Eylau, detail (*Louvre*).

earth, of history, of the light, and of death, romanticism contributes to break the ancient forms of religion and of the law, which science, with its slower, stealthier step, attacks at the same time. France, who for two centuries had been a reasoner, suddenly becomes an artist again, and launches forth wildly toward life, which reveals its new rhythms, and bursts the old molds. In the domain of sensation she equals the effort which the preceding age had made in the direction of war and liberty. The philosophical investigation of the French, the metaphysical analysis of the Germans, and the impotence for action after the greatest moment of action in history have produced intellectual despair, and also the sensation that it is increased by its indifference to the moral problem; but again there is consolation for that in the endless splendor which has been achieved. France has inundated the world, which flows back from everywhere. Here is the whole terrestrial universe, and all the skies and all the oceans, all the adventures of the men of the olden time and of to-day, all the ancient or distant myths of the sun and of the mist, the Inferno of Dante, the pitiless, clear sight of Goethe, and the immense reverie, enchanted and poignant, of Shakespeare. Sebastian Bach, Mozart, Gluck, and the last to come, Beethoven, contribute, to the troubled depths of existence the tumult of the great harmonies of nature, which turn confusedly into new elements expressive of the delirium of the intelligence and of the tragedy in men's hearts.

Painting offers itself to the artist. It is music in its power of expressing the form of sentiment, by color, by its multiple reflections which answer one another, by its gradations, its passages, its immense keyboard, from black or colored shadow at the bottom of the abyss, to the brilliant summits of the most strongly marked projections. The sensation of sonority and the sensation of color merge in it, the tempest of the orchestra unchains in it a rhythmed tumult of subtle sense impressions in which one perceives clamors, moans, cries of anger, and sighs of voluptuousness, even as one sees grand architectures arising, and forms mounting and descending like a sea when the power of an orchestra forces one to close one's eyes. In this century, the poets will be painters. The whole surface of the world breaks up and vibrates and moves in the work of Hugo; and in the work of Baudelaire, the whole burning spirit of matter, of perfumes, and of colors pours forth from the heart, like a lava of blood,

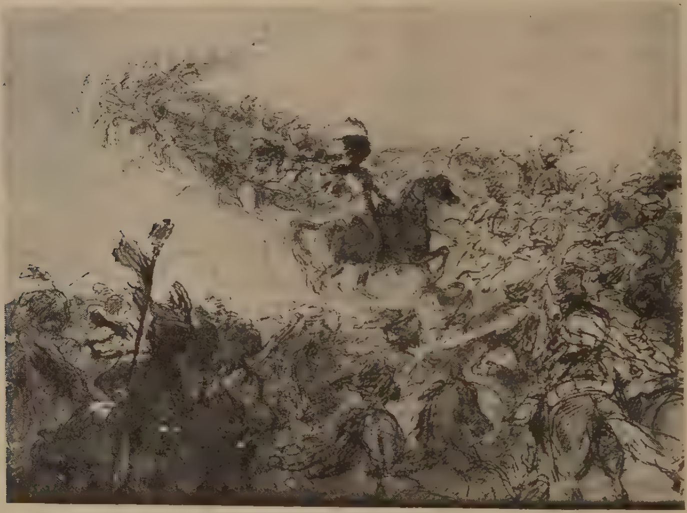


Rude. Portrait of Monge, marble (*Louvre*).

following each throb of the arteries. In the music of Berlioz, the face of nature appears like a violent drawing, in which decisive strokes cross their flames, or crawl like reptiles, leaving a wake of fire. But painting is an object in itself, an object which France has kept under her eyes constantly for three hundred years, while Germany, who never really loved it, has, for two hundred years, no longer had the vision for it, while in Italy it is falling to dust, and while Spain no longer perceives it save in the glare of a single flash of lightning. The dictatorship of David bears its fruits at once. While the Academy claims to follow him, in order to drag on for two generations more its insolent and servile poverty, everything strong and green turns to David to seek the structure which Delacroix will break in places, will brutally twist, and will combine in a hundred fashions, in order to sustain the burning flesh and the movement of his fever, and which Ingres will purify and vivify, little by little, in order to inclose in it the concrete and definite object of his desire. Down to Courbet—and including the time of Courbet—David will hold the regency of painting. Under him the sculptor Rude studied the anatomical nude and learned how to set a violent body in equilibrium on legs which seem to hold to the ground like trunks of oak trees, and how to hurl into the stone his democratic enthusiasm—a trifle hollow, but living—which sets up a vibration on the face of the walls. The "Raft of the Medusa" of Géricault, the "Barricade" of Delacroix, and the first plates of Daumier bear the traces, quite as manifestly, of the lessons of the old regicide, who would have recognized his spirit in their mountainous modeling, which throws the muscles and the skeleton into relief, and so brings these masters nearer to him than Ingres ever was. And it is from him that Gros will borrow, for his military poems, the solid, but too stiff and too fixed, architecture which will end by paralyzing their movement and stifling their flame.

It is certain that the man was born a great painter. Whereas the fire of Watteau was no longer giving forth more than a few intermittent gleams in the painting of Greuze and of Fragonard, whereas Davidian discipline concentrated itself entire upon the rendering of brute matter and upon following the contours of Roman sculptures, Gros felt the warrior energy of his time burning in his veins. Rubens, the man who launched his own life like a great river into all future time, had dazzled him. He had followed Bonaparte on foot, from the Alps to the Tyrol, lived in the tumultuous crowd of the camps and of the marches that struck like thunderbolts, seen the slender boy with the eyes of fever seizing a flag amid the bullets and pass through death, in order to gain possession of the right to command men and to subjugate the future. There is no abstraction in his desire. He painted war horses with open nostrils, bloody eyes, and hair matted by blood and dust, while their breath and sweat mingle with the reddened haze of smoke of the northern battlefields. He copied cadavers in the blood-stained snow. While Bonaparte was annexing to the moral domain of Europe the desert peopled with sphinxes and with tombs, and the oldest adventure of the world, Gros experienced the chagrin of remaining exiled in France, imagining the burning sand, the leaden expanse of the mirages, the storm of the horsemen with the wind whipping their bernouses, and, in the damp, ill-smelling shadow of some mosque where the lamps have burned out, where the dulled glaze of tiles is soiled by disease, the dying men who crawl there, their faces turning green, and their bandages spotted with black blood around open sores. With the blue steel of the cuirasses, the cloth and the velvet of the multicolored uniforms, with the flashes of the firing, and with bits of sky seen amid flying manes, he had acquired the power of organizing dramas full of the color and movement of war; in them life was exalted by war, whose brutal movement was carried into the young and lyrical souls which were opening up everywhere.

Had Gros already possessed the mastery needed to project outside himself his furious gestures and his powerful harmonies, as a free and unified symbol of the storms of his heart, romanticist painting would have been finished at a single blow. But he hesitated. He hesitated between the object too closely pursued and the magisterial doctrine to which he gave too servile attention. The two things clashed. A too direct realism enchained the tragedy. The overtense drawing of the School arrested the living sentiment



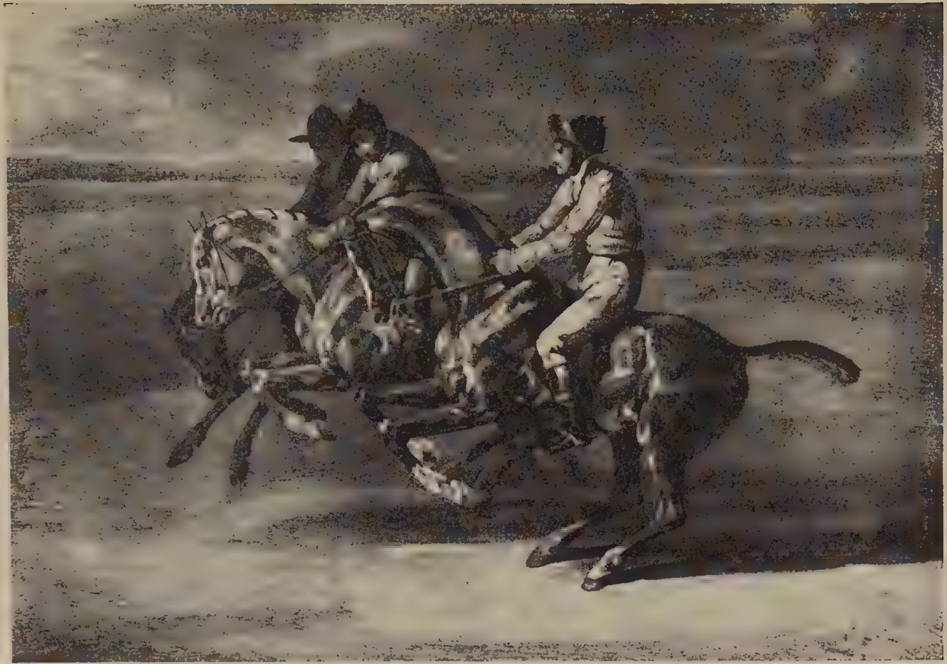
RAFFET. Nocturnal Procession, etching (*Lille*).

which was ready to bound from the soul, paralyzing its flight in a tangle of bizarre and factitious forms. Gros's work stands as a passage full of anguish between the immobility of David and the tumult of Delacroix. He kept on stubbornly till the end, and even seemed to comprehend the situation less and less. While around him, with Géricault, and soon with Delacroix, the flame of revolt was rising, he made it his point of honor to defend the School of the old master, exiled in Brussels by the Restoration. But the old master was, in his letters at this very time, confessing to him his admiration for Rubens. Against the young men who were taking him as a point of departure, almost against David, and, above all, against himself, Gros remained obstinate in establishing his art at the antipodes of his being. Upon a certain day, in despair at the oblivion into which he was sinking, bleeding from all the wounds which the art he had revealed was inflicting upon him at each new exhibition, incapable of breaking the matrix which was hardening around his genius and was crushing him little by little, he killed himself. He died a romanticist, at the very moment when, through Hugo, through Berlioz, and through Delacroix, Romanticism was affirming itself.

II

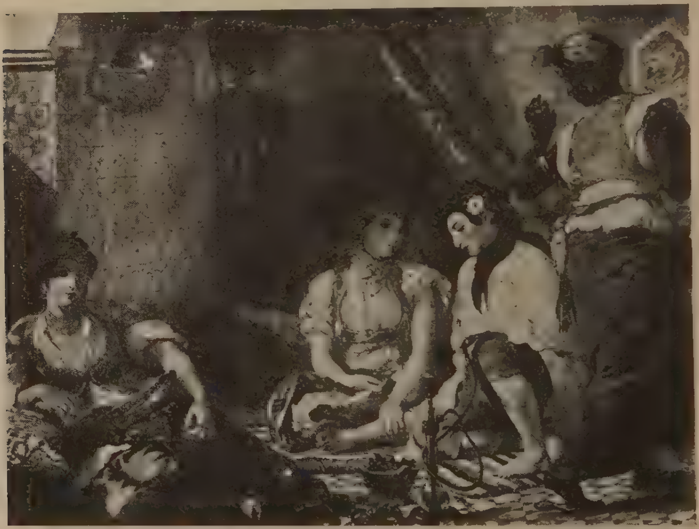
The death and the life of all beings are linked one with the other. An invincible harmony reigns in the destiny of men, and even after their days. In complete triumph, but misunderstood and alone, Delacroix, like a sick lion, vomits his blood in the depths of his cave. An old eagle whose feathers have been torn out, Berlioz, preparatory to his death, retires to the high aërie where the ice and the sun of the peaks complete the burning out of men's nerves after they have delighted in love too much. Hugo, a giant demagogue, emperor of words and of the boards, expires, lulled by the murmur of an immense people, which tries to retain him. Baudelaire ends as a wreck, poisoned by the perfume of his great venomous flowers, and mingling his sublime putrefaction with the fermentation of the sensual universe. When his mystic dream of society crumbles in the conflagrations of the Commune, the arteries break in Michelet's brain. Wagner, at the center of the city ardent in its setting and in its painting, falls to sleep in the arms of Isolde, between sea and sky. Vigny dies without speaking. Corot takes the pipe from his mouth, and draws his last breath amid a few good friends. Musset, the man drunk with sentiment, dies of drunkenness. Dostoievski is taken away to the cemetery by a noisy mob of prostitutes princes, priests, and convicts. Tolstoy, in order that he may live according to the last dictates of his heart, dies of cold on the threshold of a poor cabin.

The life and the end of Géricault symbolize romanticism. They possess its violent and absolute spirit of conquest, irreparably, without thought of the morrow, its indifference to morals, and its bitter taste of death. He is in the vanguard, coming from Prud'hon, as he says of himself, and standing between Gros, whose weapons he gathers up to combat David, and Delacroix, who will take possession of his passionate movement, to inject into it more of flame and of mystery, by causing to enter into it his tide of ardent matter and of moving color. Too much black. Too many nude statues, but a modeling accentuated by the tragic shadow; the dead lying everywhere, a heap of livid cadavers tossed by the ocean; he is possessed by a mad passion for invading the world of sensation through all the senses. When his brief task is ended, and his young friend Delacroix has exhibited

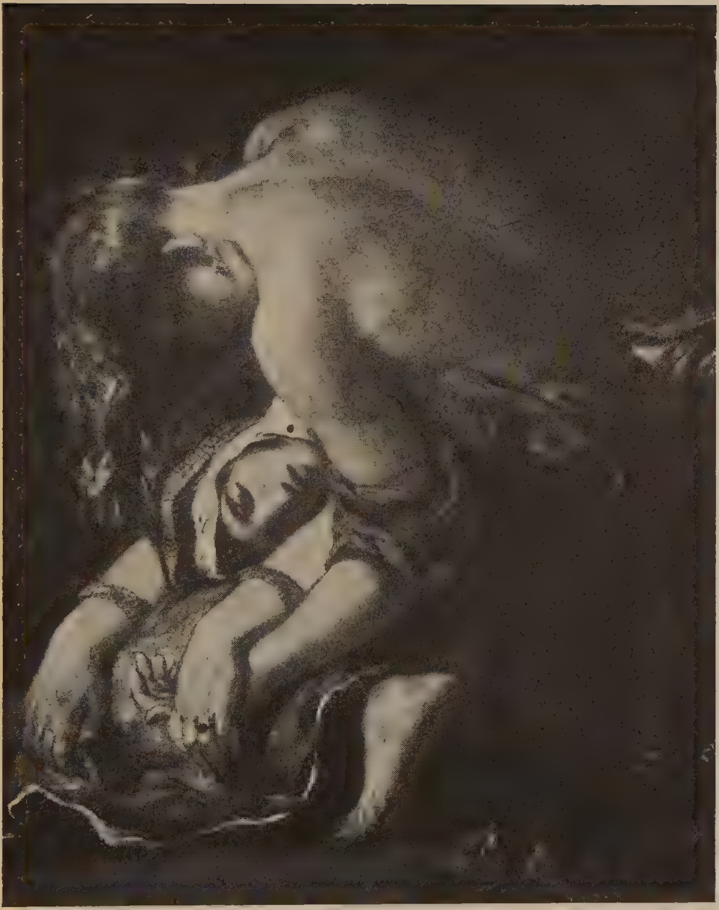


GÉRICAULT. The Race, lithograph.

the "Bark of Dante" and begun the "Massacre of Scio"—the war cry of romanticism—he dies, consumed by phthisis and by dissipation, through having fallen from a savage horse. Delacroix will not complete that task, for he is too powerful ever to accept frontiers between life, which is ever incomplete, and his work, which is ever rising; but when he disappears, the world will find itself in the presence of a new mystery. A man will have possessed, in a state of incessant germination, the silent pride of Vigny, the endless plastic wealth of Hugo, the eternal sensual vibration of Baudelaire, a tormented aspiration similar in its profundity to Shakespeare's, and, in a heart throbbing with fever, the harmony of will gained by his constant frequentation of Racine and of Poussin. The strongest and greatest painter-soul since Rembrandt.



Delacroix. Women of Algiers (*Louvre*).



Delacroix. The Taking of Constantinople, detail (*Louvre*).

A few hours had sufficed him, while the exhibition was being organized behind official doors, to repaint the "Massacre of Scio" after having seen Constable's canvases which taught him the luminosity to be drawn from divided tones. English painting, so superficial, but of so rich a surface, and unknown in France during forty years, because of the incessant wars, entered his mind at the right moment, both by the authority of the masters and by the insistence of a friend, Bonington having confided to him his gifts and his dreams, while working near him. Almost at once, he acquires his technique, which he will go on perfecting until the end. He made for himself a chromatic frame, on which the colors are disposed according to the diametrical oppositions, which are reunited with one another by their intermediary tones.[1] Already one sees violently heightened tones, transparent glazes over long passages of distinct cross-hatching employed to make the painting vibrate; one sees the colored transparence of shadows, and the use of pure colors and of separate touches in order to banish neutral tones and gray. But what trifles all these things are! His lean, small hand brandishes, as if it were an arrow, this instrument which is so heavy for those who are alarmed by the weight of the weapon they are to raise. He reads Dante. He reads Shakespeare. He reads Faust, and illustrates it, and the old Goethe is startled at being understood by such a boy. He listens to Gluck and to Mozart. He writes much, almost always for himself alone, and his metaphysical torment often makes one think of Pascal. He meditates and trembles

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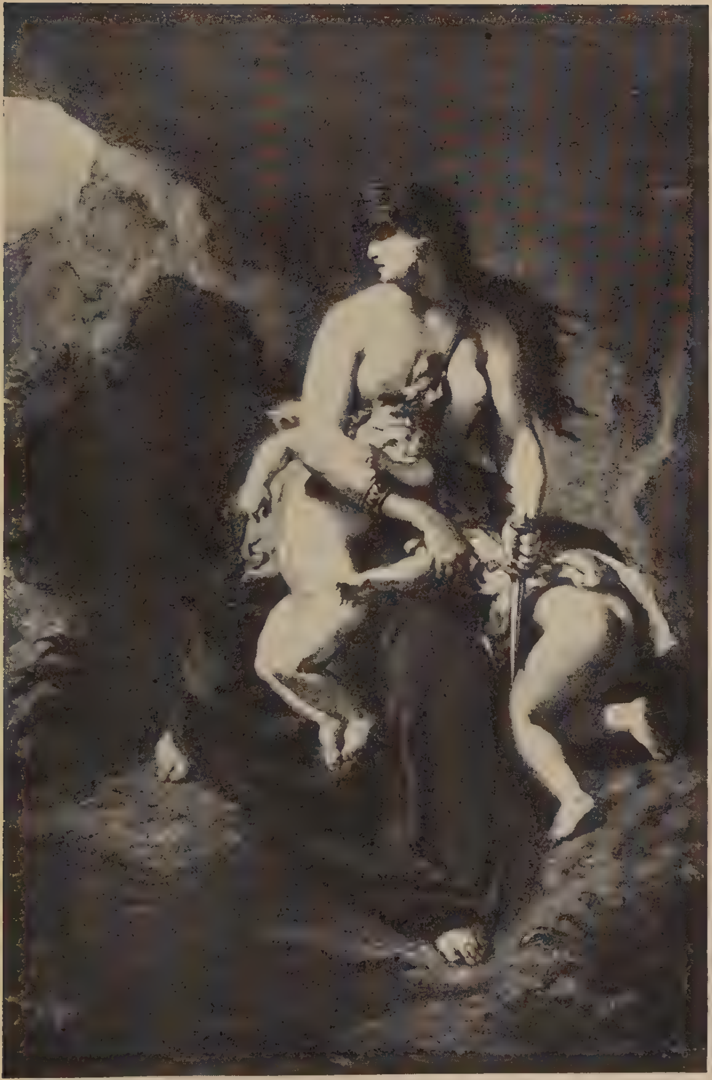
[1] Reported, in his *Artistes Français*, by Th. Sylvestre, the only writer, after Baudelaire, to have the sense of great painting in the nineteenth century. Fromentin, a little painter and an eminent littérateur, understands it less, and hypnotizes himself—sagaciously, indeed—upon questions of technique. He is, and must remain, the idol of the grammarians of painting.

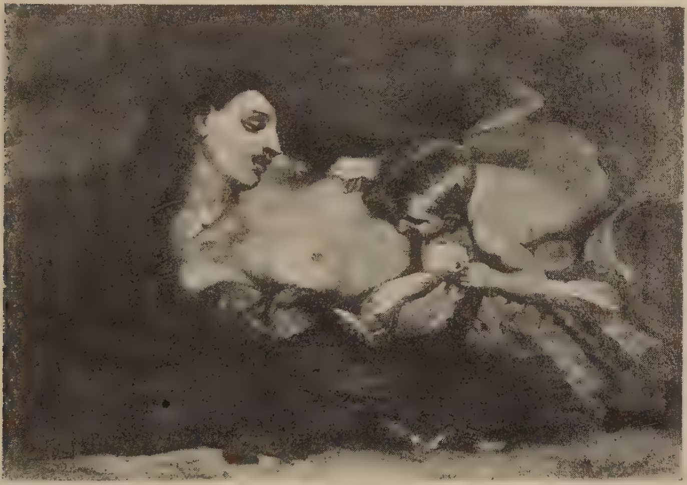


Delacroix. Medea (*Louvre*).

with fever before Michael Angelo. He reaps a harvest from Veronese, and with full hands. The power of Rubens fills him with its great continuous wave. His external life is dignified and somewhat aloof, with an impeccable varnish of fashion, under which rumbles the volcano. In the street, he observes the walk of women, the roll of their hips, the tremble of their breasts, and the dull splendor of their necks, as solid as a column; he loves horses, trees, the great sky when cloudy or when it has its aspect of twilight, and the coming of night. There are his elements, there is his language, even if he is to sharpen it, and render it more supple, more firm, and more direct. It serves him to carry outside himself the symbols of his thought, as the gesture of an orchestra-leader wrests from the silence of wood- and wind-instruments which had been sleeping, the song of all the nightingales of the forest, mingled with the voices of all the rivers, and all the words of men which are swept along by all the winds.

For of all the musicians of painting, he is perhaps the most complex and the most poignant. He often causes one to think of Beethoven, often of Wagner, sometimes of Berlioz. In poor health and nervous, with the face of a sick lion, he has the drawn features, the burning eyes, and the pale complexion of men in whose tense heart dwells a symphonic, chaotic, and contradictory storm, but who have the mute strength to impose upon it the order and mastery of the mind. A singular discord reigns between his temperament and his culture, but if he takes the brush in his hand, everything obeys at the very instant, and the cries of passion roll under the dull harmony, like those boiling jets of water through which submarine eruptions lift up, in places, the somber surface of the sea. His soul is bound to the universe by the luminous vibrations which his eye alone perceives, and which have the sonority, the mystery, and the infiniteness of music. All space resounds, like an immense lyre, with the colorations and the lights which place it in the region of his own inner drama.

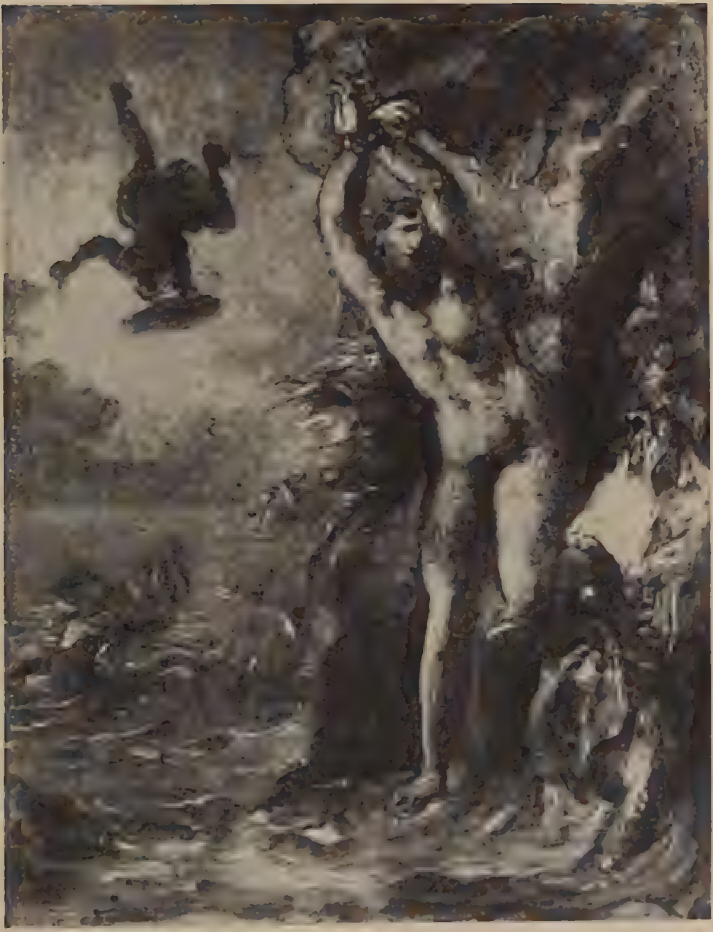
Of what importance are his subjects, those of all the men of his time—history, sometimes myth, the tragedies of the dramatists of the north, the Orient which is being opened by conquest and by travel, and which a long excursion that he himself makes to Morocco reveals to him with its scorching sadness, its color of blood and of tragedy, its men and its animals, indolent and convulsive, the antique fatalism, and the implacable, nomadic spirit which continue and prolong themselves in its cunning immobility, its silence, and its cruelty? That which he paints is the agitation of a hallucinated soul, which a great harmony, piercing but



DELACROIX. The Massacre of Scio, detail
(*Private collection*).

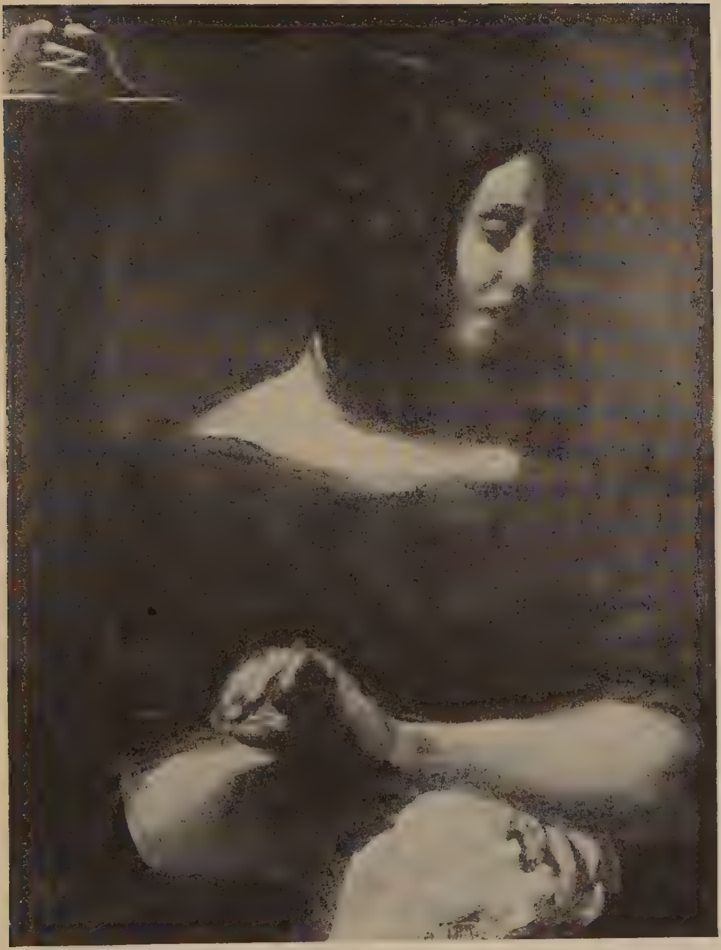
accepted, dominates from the regions of the invisible, of which he has a presentiment. Everything expresses movement: the distant and narrow streets of a city, twisting like masses of serpents, the clouds and the smoke carried along by the same wind in which the pennants flap, the waving flames of torches, oak trees gashed in the track of the lightning, the ascending and centripetal gallop of the horses who draw the chariot of the sun, or the twist of trunks and limbs which a central tragedy hurls around the same point or distributes from one end of the canvas to the other, according to the bounding rhythms of flight, of attack, of defense, or of voluptuousness.

That which he expresses is rather the spirit than the form of movement. Or rather, his own spirit determines the movement. He draws from the object, but the moment that he takes up his brush he shuts himself up all alone; without a model, he attacks his picture from all sides at once, hastens his whole march toward the horizon of his desire, sees surrounding life like a sphere, full and confused, and goes to it to demand the expression of the accidentals of its surface from the spiritual density of its secret depths. Here is hunger, monstrous paws clutching torn arms and bleeding breasts, muzzles drawn back from teeth, eyes like hot coals, and wild boars covered with blood as they tear through lungs. Here is anger, here are the bare shoulders, breasts, and arms of mothers stung to fury, the child hanging from their fierce embrace, and a dagger in their hand. Here is war, blood as red as the sky and the conflagration, eyes consumed by weeping, black or red hair twisted like vipers, the arms of a cadaver stretched out over the knees of a dying woman, and here are horses who scent death. Here is love, with the tragic meaning it assumes with anyone who has greatness, the somber flowers in the depth of the



Delacroix. Andromeda (*Private collection*).

perfumed shadow, the necklaces chinking on the burning skin, the ambered bellies which recede into the shadow of the hidden thighs, the terrific attraction of the deep fruits in which the strong man finds strength, from which the weak man drinks poison, but before which no man knows in advance whether he is weak or whether he is strong. Here is death, the lips of children feeling around breasts hardened by the cold swelling of the putrefaction soon to come, and the waves, under low clouds, rolling decomposed cadavers, stiffened arms, white mouths, and lips turning back over teeth. The form and the color are a thought in action. One can no longer speak of them, but of a continuous rhythmic bounding, in which the imagination of the painter, a prey to the ordered lyricism of those who absorb the world in order to give it the form of their skull and the movement of their heart, liberates and fuses his sensations, his ideas, and his sentiments. What does the word "drawing" mean in these moving surfaces which the drama twists, convulses, and embosses from within, so that it may bring the expression of the spirit to certain dominant projections, which cause the color to roar, sigh, laugh, or sing? The color itself moves. It vibrates, it hesitates or sinks down, and rises and descends like the sea. The local tone, the reflection, the passage, and the value are the very actors of the drama. That red which sinks and grows somber in the carnage sends forth a continuing clamor, that pink laughs in sinister fashion amid that dark hair, that blue sends into revolting hearts the mirage of paradise that one thinks to be within reach of one's hand, that gold and that carmine undulate and burn in the enervating warmth of a room of voluptuousness, and that livid green is taken from seas of storm and from flesh in putrefaction, to express the passage or the empire of death. The tone which is born and dies and is reborn

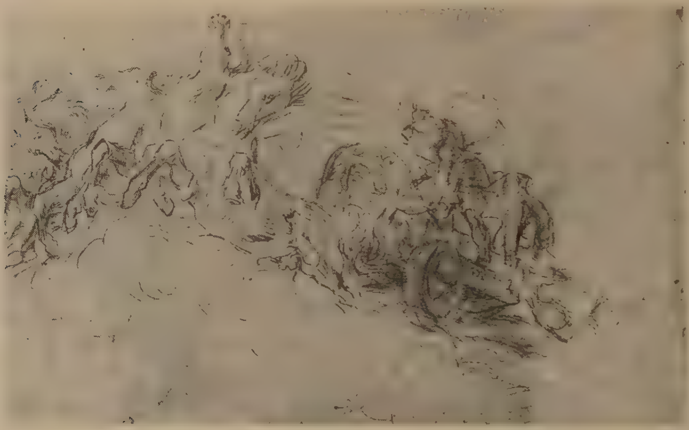


Delacroix. George Sand (*Private collection*).

under the eyes of men sixty years after the death of the painter, interprets the profound movement of his dramatic emotion, which the breathless line pursues in order to inclose it in the actual. And whatever the energy of this line, which bounds and rebounds under the repeated burning touches of the creative flame, the tragedy of the color seems to escape from it, to outstrip it, and to drag it along in its torment, as it hurries to reach the mystic depths where the universe seems to unite its confused force with the soul of greatly inspired men. Delacroix is probably the only man who, without ever being vanquished, has constantly gone to seek outside the eternal symbols of the Greek myth and of the Bible, in literature and in modern history, pretexts for manifesting his passion. This overflowing, one over the other, of the languages of faith, music, poetry, and painting, is a new phenomenon, one in which romanticism usually strikes against its reef, but also, with two or three men, Delacroix, Baudelaire, Wagner, sometimes Hugo, sometimes Berlioz, the summit whence it can claim to reach the invisible region where all forms of faith dwell and are confused in the highest symbolism. Of all, it is certainly the painter who runs most dangers, for if he, for a second, loses sight of the object—the plastic architecture of the earth and of heaven, the sinking of the volumes into the depth of the planes, the gamut of the values, and the solidarity of the lines—the whole world of sentiment in which literature moves at ease entangles him, steals his savor, submerges him, and misleads his mind, taking it away from the region of the concrete, where his imagination must seek all its food. Reality, for the painter, is surely the inner vision of the universe which he possesses. But all vision whose material roots do not plunge everywhere into the unlimited substance of the sense life of the painter, does not belong to painting. The English pre-Raphaelites, the German didactic painters, Boecklin the Swiss, and Gustave Moreau the Frenchman, will learn this to their cost, and not at the cost of painting, which is in no way concerned with them.

Because his eyes possessed the secret of sight, he is, then, the only one on this peak who possesses such mastery that his literary emotions, his metaphysical tortures, his aspirations of sentiment, and the confused visions which music arouses in him, are transposed into the real world of colors and of forms which thereby is extended as if by a god. Here, then, is the history of men and its fatality, which we name love, or will, and its pitiless serenity, which we call cruelty. Here are the faces of ecstasy or of sorrow under which the march of events goes its indifferent way. Here is Faust, the doctor. Here is exact knowledge arrived at the brink of nothingness and leaning, appalled, over its abyss, where the void and night plunge from a bed of flowers. Here is the reverie of Hamlet. Here is the invincible mystery, the boundless immensity of space and of feeling which was contained entire in a box of bone for less time than the life of a plant, and which disappeared thence forever in the space of a lightning flash. And here is the only image for the possession of which it is important that we should live: the one which a great soul realizes in order to test the value of its enthusiasm, and which is found to correspond to so many undecided, stammering indications in the fleeting objects of our love, that, little by little, it becomes for us more real than the world, and affords us a faith which has greater youth after each one of our crises of despair.

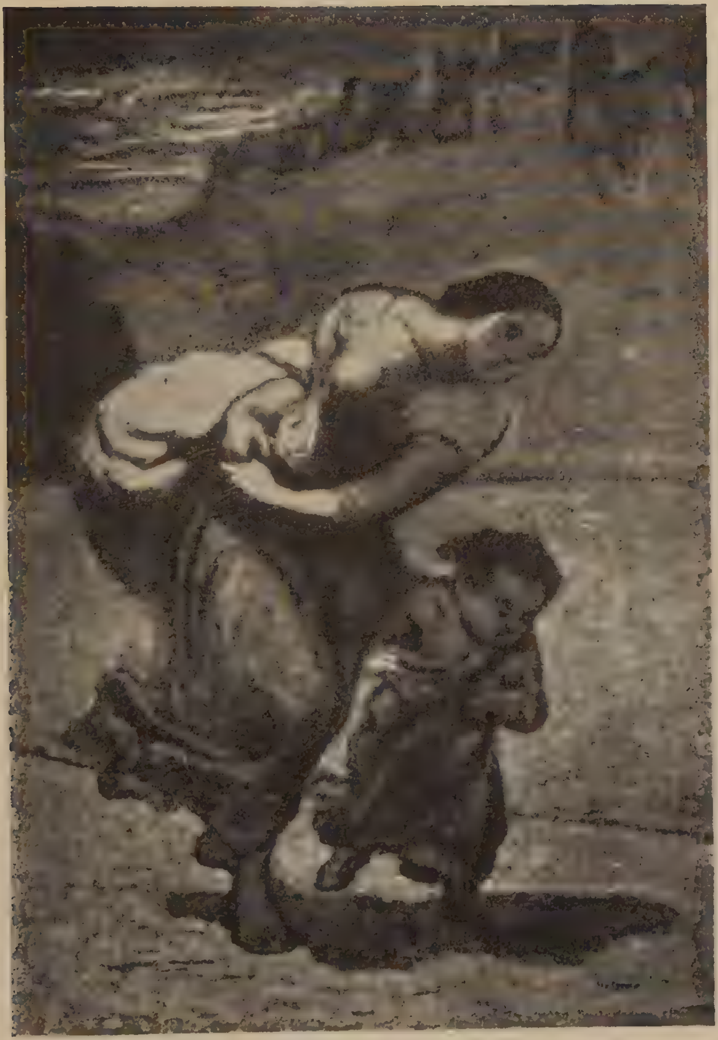
"What is most real in me are the Illusions which I create. . . ." Yes. And by these Illusions which he creates, Eugène Delacroix converses, as Baudelaire expresses it, with the "supernatural." His religion is a burning and inexhaustible hearth, fed by all the dramas, all the faces of nature, and everything that is tragic and that is charming in the brief human adventure; and on this hearth he pours his fire. With Rembrandt, Rubens, and Michael Angelo, he is perhaps the man who has labored most and best in painting to wrest the great mystery from the domain of theology, and to install it in the deepest recess of the human heart, which is forever borrowing it from the impassable immensity of the universe, in order to give it humanity's confused animation, and return the mystery to the universe, increased by the immensity of the heart.



DELACROIX. The Chariot of the Sun, drawing (*Louvre*).

III

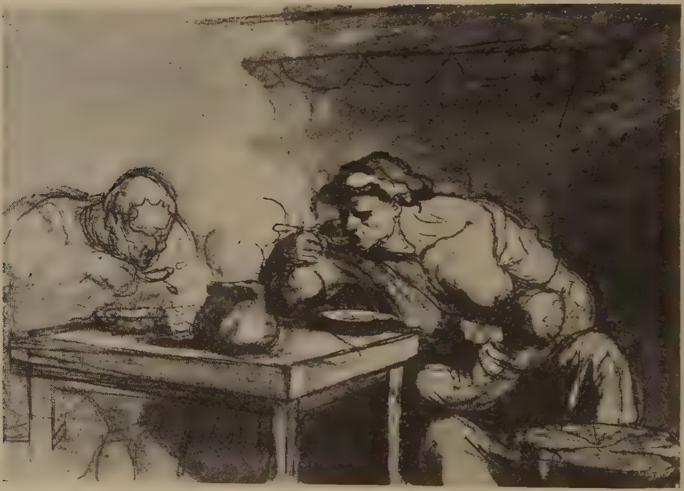
Not one among those who were, doubtless, the greatest among the great painters, not one, it seems, equals him—Rembrandt excepted—in profundity, and in force of sentiment; not one—Rubens excepted—in



Daumier. The Burden (*Private collection*).

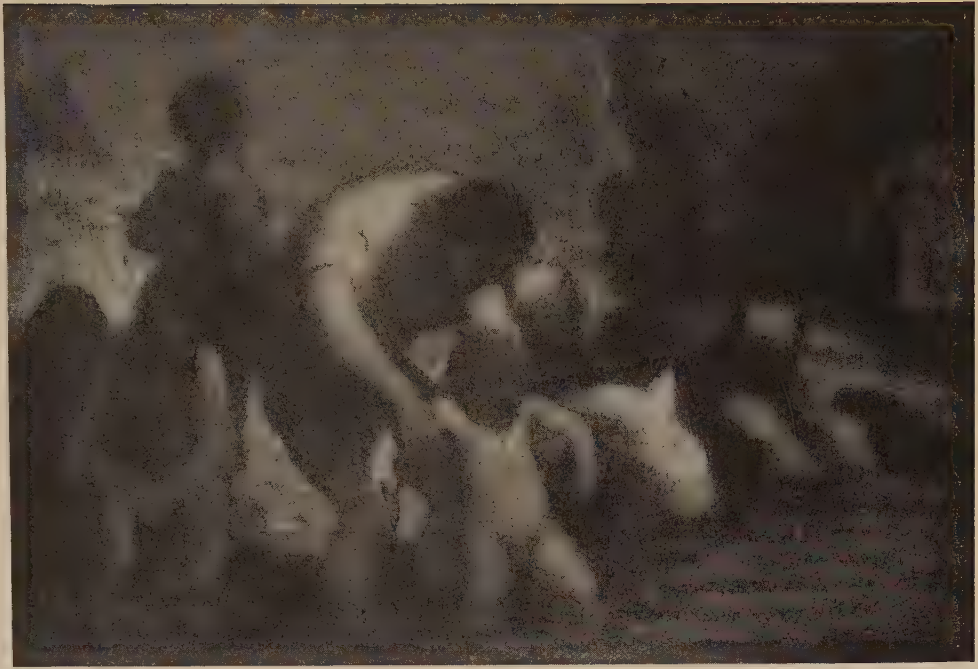
the torrent-like power of expressive movement; not one—Michael Angelo excepted—in capacity for transporting into painting that which seems to belong to the domain of abstract meditation and of the moral prophet. But perhaps there is sometimes lacking in him, that which is never lacking in any of them—the faculty of suppressing and of selecting. There is order in his brain, and even a kind of impressive calm beneath the apparent agitation, but it is not always in his heart. He feels too much, he wants to say too much; and if the ensemble is always living, it sometimes is too much alive, it reels, as if it could not bear the weight of silence. The romanticists construct organically, their point of departure is the inner impulse, and they spread forth their expressive surfaces with so much haste and violence that too often the movement appears confused and overloaded. The contemplation of the object intoxicates the individual to such an extent that the object becomes as living as the individual himself, but its lines waver and the core of the expression bursts forth alone, brilliant, hallucinating, and radiant with strength and love. Hugo abounds in holes, in empty places full of smoke and wind. Wagner is often loose and prolix, and his giant breast suffocates under the flowers he heaps up. The grandiose melody of Berlioz soars for a moment, its two great wings spreading, and then it falls headlong, in a crash of vulgar noises and deafening cries. Delacroix, who, most of all, retains mastery over his power, bounds out of his own rhythm at times, and gets out of breath in racing to regain it. Rodin, the last of all in point of time, has a colossal power of expressing the profound life of the object by the vibrations of its surface. But it is at the expense of his equilibrium and of his relations with those who surround him; there is not one monumental ensemble which holds together from top to bottom.

That is the ransom, doubtless, of every too exceptionally expressive force, necessarily as far from the great architectural calm as the reasons of the heart are distant from reason. Since the painters of the coffins of Christian Egypt, the Hindus, Rabelais, Tintoretto, and Shakespeare, no one has possessed, in the same degree as the great romanticists, the power of expressing that which is most irresistible and most intoxicating in the inner movement of life. The process scarcely changes, but what renders it all-powerful and impossible to imitate is that it is not a process but a way of seeing, a way of acting, a way of living. The romantic painter, or sculptor, or poet finds in the object, with a certitude like that of a thunderbolt, the summit of his expression. Then he surrounds this summit with his creative fever, and, from every point, all things are swept toward it. He is born within the object, he lifts it up, he guides it from one side only, he breaks open its surface. He bursts forth to meet the light, casting behind him into vagueness or the night everything hostile, secondary, or merely indifferent. Hugo, whether he writes or draws, carries his tyrannical desire to the point of diametrical oppositions: the ruins on the promontories, the storm, the ocean, the mountain, everything that is unmeasured and everything that is fateful is indicated and violently modeled by the conflict of antitheses—of light and shadow. Raffet creates a straight line of aigrettes in swift movement, walls of steel, long flowing manes, and a thousand silent hoofs—the whole thing is a single block—and the rumble of destiny is heard in the darkness. Baudelaire accumulates in the center of his vision all the scattered sense impressions which a fanatical and consuming sensibility has permitted him to gather up from a hundred thousand similar objects. Constantin Guys lengthens the painted eyes of the courtesans, accentuates the blood-red note of their mouths, weighs down their hard breasts, makes their jewels heavier and more sonorous, masses higher on their necks the coils of dark hair with its combs and its flowers— and at once the odor of love fills the ballrooms and the shows, prowls the length of the hot streets, enervates the summer evenings and the anxious waiting of the night. Barye concentrates the whole spirit of attack and of defense in the big paws of his wild beasts, in the bunches of muscles of their shoulders, and in the vibrant, tight-strung planes of their thighs and of their backs. Daumier seizes the heart of the drama, and ties tight around it all the expressive knots which a grand and intuitive science of form in action reveals to him incessantly.



DAUMIER. The Soup, drawing (*Private collection*).

He would suffice to define that aspiration, held in common by all the romanticists, for concentrating the



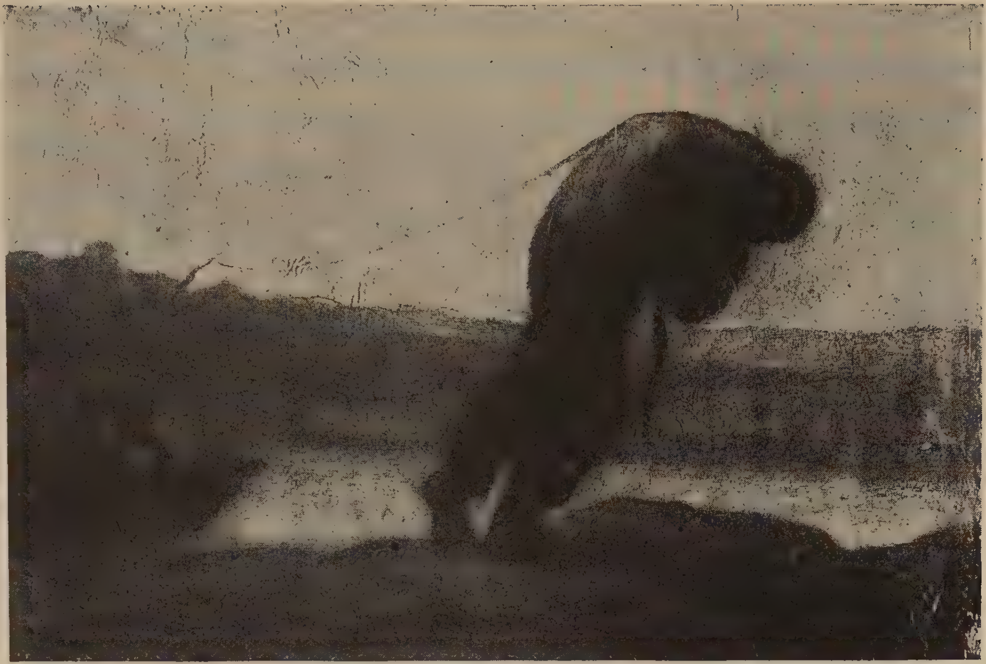
Daumier. The Bath (*Private collection*).

whole expression in some sudden projection to which all the lines and all the lights flock from every side, enthusiastic and obedient like so many units of energy moving toward a central force which is to be manifested. Millet, at the same time, is attempting this, and sometimes almost realizes it, when he lays down his brush for the pen or the pencil. But the form, which he seeks to keep simple and naïve, defined by a few bare planes, almost always remains empty. Later, at the other extremity of romanticism, but with the same means, Carrière expresses not so much a desire for the qualities of plastic art as he does his need for sentiment.

With Daumier, on the contrary, the form, which an arabesque of light sculptures, describes, and directs, by its gradations, its surface progressions, and its flowing into depth, turns and twists, as full as a living bronze, knotting and distending itself under the impulsion of effort, of desire, or of hunger, like intertwined vine- and ivy-stems, which draw from the heart of the earth their nourishment and their support. In considering him, one always thinks of several of the masters who have best rendered the pathos of the human form in action. This simple, direct man is the natural fruit of an intense European culture which has not yet left its orbit, and all the old classics recognize themselves in him. He is of the south and of the north. Born in Marseilles, where the shadow and the sun sculpture mountains and shores into broad planes, as expressive and as solid as a structure of bare bone, he lives in the Paris street, in the seething center of everyday tragedy and comedy, which one perceives as soon as one suspends one's automatic pace in order to let one's glance rest for a moment on the scene. He lives in the Paris street. He certainly knows Rembrandt, Rubens, Tintoretto, and Michael Angelo. But he does not think of them when, with the living daylight, which Rembrandt used at will, he illuminates men and women whose action is revealed by projecting volumes which Michael Angleo would have recognized, and by tangles of limbs in which Rubens and Tintoretto would have seen their power of making all the movements of life find their echo in the continuity of lines and the receding of planes.

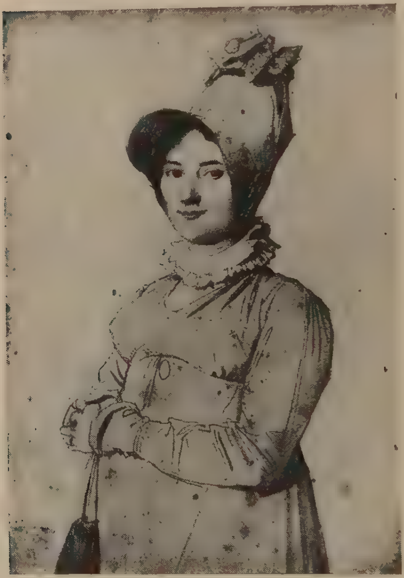
One would say that he paints with burning clay. It is a sculpture of our drama in which the bones and the muscles collect the entire spirit of the drama, whose penumbra takes back little by little or suddenly the past or present incidents which are not its real point of connection or its spiritual sense. A sublime expression of sentiment arises from the plastic means exclusively, and if he is as good as a saint is, it is because he is as strong as a hero. The drawn shoulder and arm of that woman carrying a basket who is followed by the toddling steps of the child that clutches at her with its little fist, express the effort of a lever too weak to raise a heavy weight. But from the depths of the centuries, pity wells up to accompany those passing figures. The enormous swelling breast from which a little being is drinking, the head and the muscular neck leaning over the soup which the iron spoon carries to the outstretched lips, all express, doubtless, a double meal. But the tragedy of hunger rumbles there like a storm. That powerful woman who presses between her arms and her bosom those beautiful nude children expresses physical health and strength in repose. But the spirit of revolt hovers over her in majesty. That little ass crushed under the weight of that fat peasant, and that skeletonlike horse which could carry no more weight than that of the thin knight, express physical poverty and vulgarity crossing a desert of ashes. But the inner spirit of man marches forth there to wrestle with God.

There is the artist. And there is the work. It is useless to recount the paradox of his career. Regarded as a caricaturist, he died very poor, very celebrated, and wholly unknown. He was a caricaturist, and that is not a serious matter. Delacroix was prudent enough to get himself elected—with difficulty—to the Institute in order to go and dine in society and wear evening dress. And Corot had the luck to be the son of prosperous tradespeople. But this man lived between the barricade, his garret, and the editorial rooms of small radical papers. He was content to possess the street and to conquer the future. They say he was unconscious of it. I doubt that. The mark of a powerful man is to be aware of his power. When one has that fine forehead, those piercing eyes, that courageous mouth, and that face, full and broad like that of Rabelais, and when one kneads the form as one pleases with that good thumb, one is not ignorant of the fact that one is a king. And if one is silent about it, and if one even reaches the point of allowing no one to imagine such a thing, it is because there is a sufficient recompense in modeling life into a resemblance to oneself. The whole dark stream of men obeyed his first call. He reigned over the street, he felt himself the sole master of it, from the moment that he set foot there. Nothing that moved in the street was foreign to him, and into this formidable disorder he introduced the despotic order which all the movements and the passions of the street organized in his mental life. The epic vision of things is only a superb submission of sensation and of the mind to the living strength of everything which the weaklings of sensation and the pontiffs of the mind neglect as inferior to their abstract or mechanical life. He stopped each time that an eloquent gesture pierced the confused uniformity of the crowd in action. He knew the broad streets where the strong man of



Daumier. The Towman (*Private collection*).

the fairs lifts iron weights and harangues an attentive circle. At the hour when the workshops pour their dramatic flood over the greasy pavement, he mingled with the passionate groups forming around the street singer and the barrel organ, and joining in on the last verses, in which popular idealism expresses its revolt or its hope. One would see him in the first row, in the fairs of the quarter, when the drummer beat his drum and the glorious barker made his speech. He loved those powerful creatures who stir the soul of the people, simple as they are, and as he is himself. The athlete folds his arm over his gigantic chest muscles, a peaceful demigod of strength and righteousness. The man singing has the fateful countenance of the first poets of heroic deeds in whose mouth the primitive religions affirm their victory from their first cry. And that clown with the painted face and the great living gesture has something about him resembling an archangel opening and shutting the gates of paradise and of hell. . . . It was in a similar spirit that Michael Angelo traced the biblical symbols on the ceilings of the Vatican. Daumier, if he lives in less torment, is probably as grave, and if, in his raci-

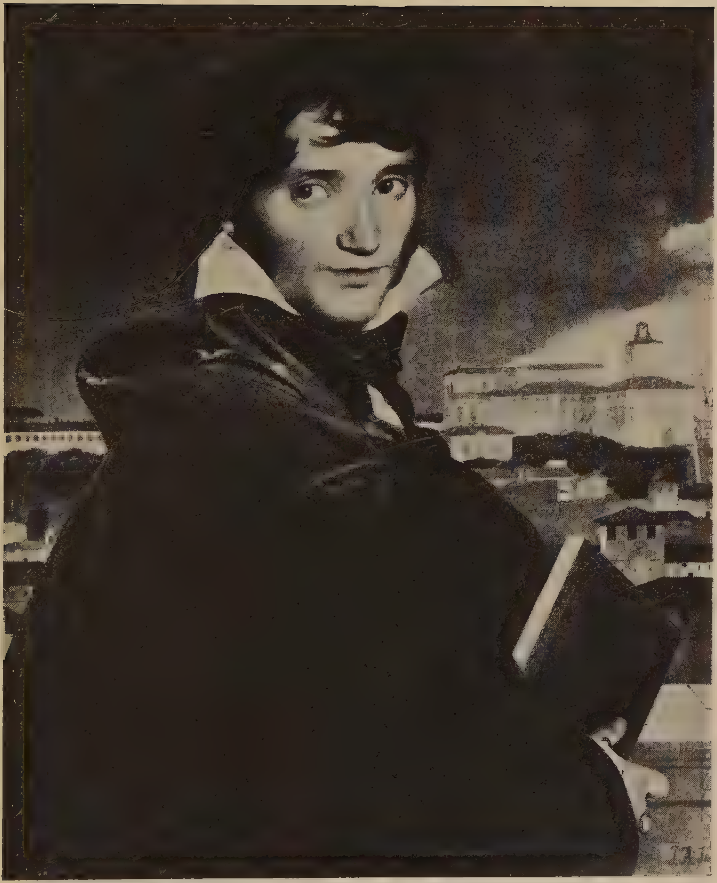

INGRES. Portrait, drawing (*Private collection*).

ness, he thunders in the language of the rough neighborhoods, there is, each time that his bolt illuminates or strikes, prophetic lightning which carries and anounces the shock.

For he is a man of justice, a man of truth. The law is a small matter to him, and the law courts even less. He is a just man. He has the mighty gayety of such a one, the irresistible strength, the indulgence, the measure, and the charity. Fines and imprisonment renew his virulence. In his prints, to which a few poor hovels in some corner, a few bare trunks on a bank, a sky where the wind blows, or a strong suggestion of the country or of the city, give the grandeur of a fresco, the blacks and the whites have the velvety and profound sonority whereby his avenging pity takes the love of the living world as a pretext through which to pour itself forth. Everywhere that a man is undeservedly vanquished, or a poor person is humiliated, everywhere that a weak man cries for help, everywhere that vulgarity and baseness triumph, he is there, by himself, to cover the one who seeks protection, and alone to face the one who is not willing to understand. He is present in the court room, where, with a magnificent laugh, his whip lash flays the unjust judge and the lying lawyer. From the top benches, he models with fierce strokes the faces, the knees, and the bellies of the legislators. He brings cartridges to the wretched dwellings of the workmen where the last visitor had spilled blood on the ground and brains on the wall. He fires his rifle with the army of the miserable, from their heap of paving stones. This simple man has in his heart all the innocent forces which, through the insurrections of the serfs and of the Communes, through the cathedral, the war of the Fronde, and the revolutionary days of 1789 and of 1830, opened to the dregs of society the roads of the future. The Pharisee and the hypocrite hide when he passes by, the bad rich man grinds his teeth, and the bad shepherd goes white. And since, in his time, it is the middle class that reigns, he lashes out at the middle class.

IV

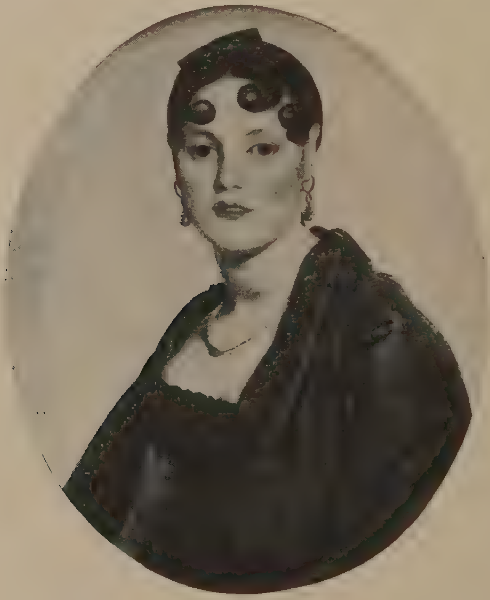
This hatred against the bourgeois is a phenomenon of romanticism, excessive, like all romanticist phenomena, but very healthy. Berlioz proclaims it with fury in his memoirs. One finds the trace of it in Delacroix's journal, though he is of too high a caste for public negation or invective. The exodus of the landscapists to Fontainebleau is an active manifestation of it. Gautier and Baudelaire wear its insignia on their clothing. A little later, Flaubert will seek in it the pretext, and Zola one of the oftenest repeated subjects of their arts. Almost the whole æsthetics of Ruskin starts with a protest of sentiment against the social order imposed by the middle class. Ibsen contrasts the muddy valleys where it reigns through the submission of the crowd, with the solitude of the peaks in their ice and their sunlight. Such unanimity as this has its necessary reasons. He who loves protests against him who profits, he who has enthusiasm rises against him who knows only interest. Balzac alone sees the beauty of conquest, but, alas! in activities of the lowest order. Not content to sing of business, he engages in business. The "get rich" of Guizot, and the narrow, domineering ferocity of Thiers are not merely objective phenomena to be described with passionate interest, but objects of admiration before which his strength abases itself. Not one of all those—neither the one who admires, nor one of all who protest—not one is capable of feeling that which there is of vigor and of grandeur in this taking possession of the wealth of the



INGRES. Portrait of the Painter Granet
(*Museum of Aix-en-Provence*).

planet by a class which had reached political freedom, at the time when they were seizing upon freedom of sensation.

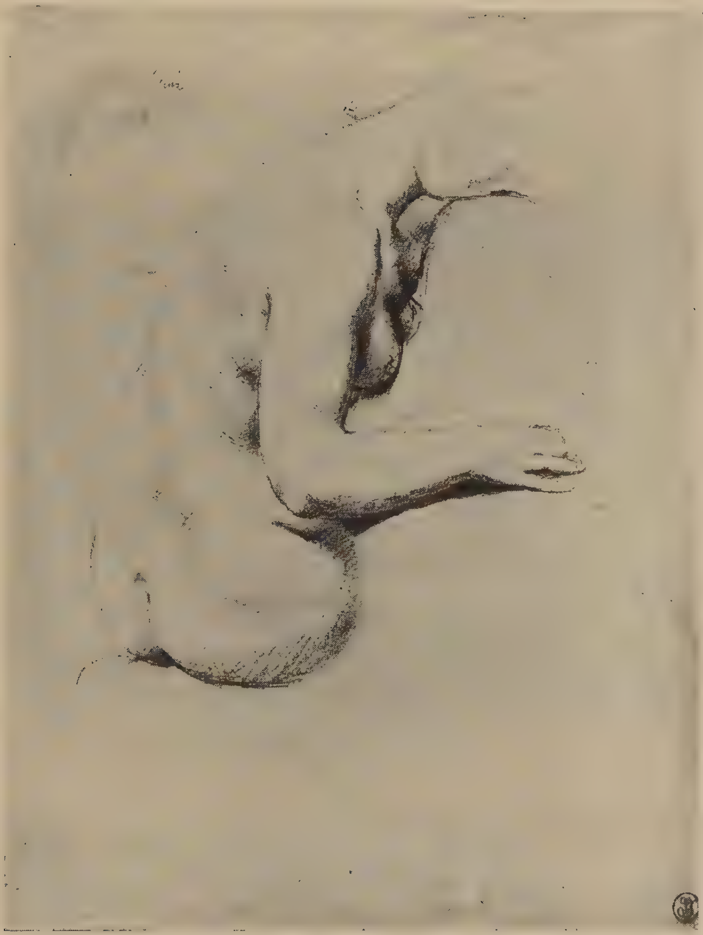
It is men a little older than they, born in the prosperous families of the bourgeoisie approaching its triumph, and reared, consequently, for the practical man's conquest of freedom of action, not men carried along by victory as they were, who represent, in the domain of the mind, the beauty of that conquest. They are southern men, moreover, as far from the idealism of sentiment, wherein the art of the north finds all its pretexts, as the realistic soldiers of the south, loving war for its terrible intoxication and its immediate advantages, were distant from the idealistic



INGRES. La belle Zélie (*Rouen*).

warriors of the north, accepting war only in order to deliver, through it, the oppressed peoples of Europe. Among them, certainly, are the connecting links, Bonaparte, Berlioz, and Daumier, among whom the melody of southern line, and its lightning flash enter the material of the north to model it profoundly, like a colored clay. But Berlioz, at Rome, turns with disgust from Stendhal, whose only offense was that he had been born twenty years earlier, at an hour when there was less enthusiasm, and in the same part of the country. And when Ingres, arriving from Rome, enters the thick of the romanticist battle, everyone who is mildly or strongly tinged with romanticism instinctively opposes him; and all the mediocrities shocked by romanticism, which stood alone at that time in its fight for the life and the freedom of passion, group themselves around him who, through weakness and vanity, permits his hands to be tied. The romanticist and the bourgeois hated or praised in Stendhal and Ingres only the dryness of their line, their apparent coldness before the object, and their narrow and direct application to rendering it as it is. The tottering academic spirit seeks in the purity of Ingres's line the justification for the Davidian doctrines upon which it is propping up its exhausted classicism as well as it could. And despite the effacement of Stendhal, and the crying paradox of the career of Ingres—who hates the School and the juries and who is made head of the School and president of the juries, who proclaims his disgust with anatomy and whose anatomical drawing is opposed to the disconnected form of Delacroix—the same error is made with regard to both, and made by all, friends and enemies alike: no one perceives, at this moment, the flame under the ice, and the ferment of revolt and the implacable pessimism under the colorless form and the traditional calm.

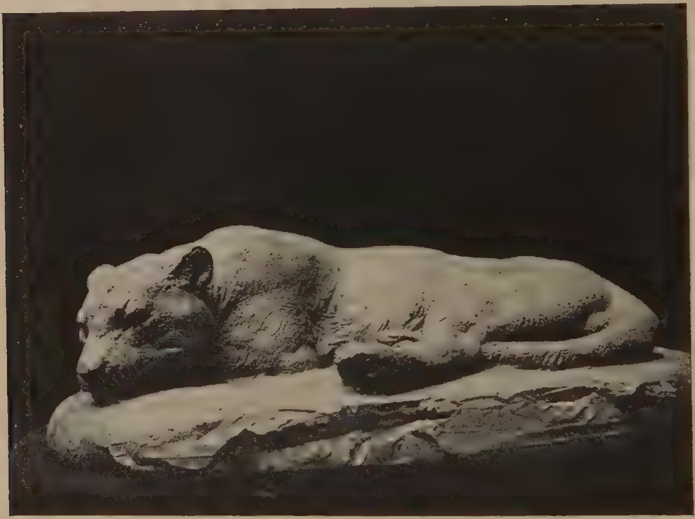
Ingres is a bourgeois of his time, throwing himself into the conquest of form, like the notary or the banker into the conquest of money. But he is a great bourgeois. He has the precise intelligence, rigorous and limited, the brutal idea of authority, and the specialized probity of those strong conquerors who, with an eye to lucre and to practical domination, dug canals, laid out roads, covered Europe with railways, launched fleets, and exchanged paper for gold over their counters. And so he could make, of these men, portraits which seemed to be cast in bronze and hollowed out with steel. It is because he closely corresponds with those who are of his epoch and of his class, that he is the last in France to trace with a pencil as sharp and hard as steel, those clear-cut psychological images which leave nothing of the inner character in the shadow, and which suppress every detail which does not emphasize this character of the man and of the woman who belong so intimately to this country. The continuity of these images is scarcely interrupted from Foucquet and the Clouets to himself, passing through Lagneau, Sébastien Bourdon, Coyzevox, Le Brun, Perronneau, La Tour, Drouais, Houdon, and twenty others; and, from Montaigne to Stendhal, all the French moralists, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, Saint-Simon, Voltaire, and Chamfort, bring to them the support of their clear-sighted testimony. The Frenchman is a born psychologist; he is lyrical by fits and starts when, in the thirteenth or the nineteenth century, some great social event—the Commune or the Revolution—occurs, to agitate, with a sound of storm, the sources of his sentiment. Stendhal and Ingres, at the hour when the poem was being reborn in the heart of the writers, of the musicians, and of the painters, had inevitably to remain unknown or misunderstood, the one finding no publishers, the other selling for twenty francs those



Ingres. Drawing for Raphael and La Fornarina (*Lyons*).

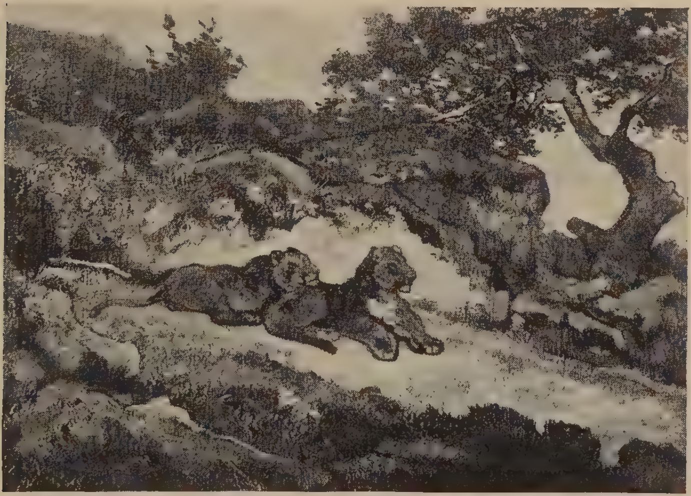
penetrating drawings, as grand as a Chinese portrait, as pure as a melody, and as close to the mind and to life as a letter or a story of the century toward whose apogee he was born.

He is a realist by force of will who, in a country of very subtle and delicately shaded realism, contributes nothing new save a form renewed and made firm once more by a contact, passionately sought, with the antique and with the Italians. Before Delacroix was born, he is already in the atelier of David, studying Roman statues and bas-reliefs at the command of the despot, keeping secret his enthusiasm for the drawings of the English sculptor Flaxman, which revealed to him the engravings after Greek vases in the language of his time, and unable to do other than admire his master's portraits, solid, authoritative, full of love,



BARYE. Tiger sleeping, bronze (*Louvre*).

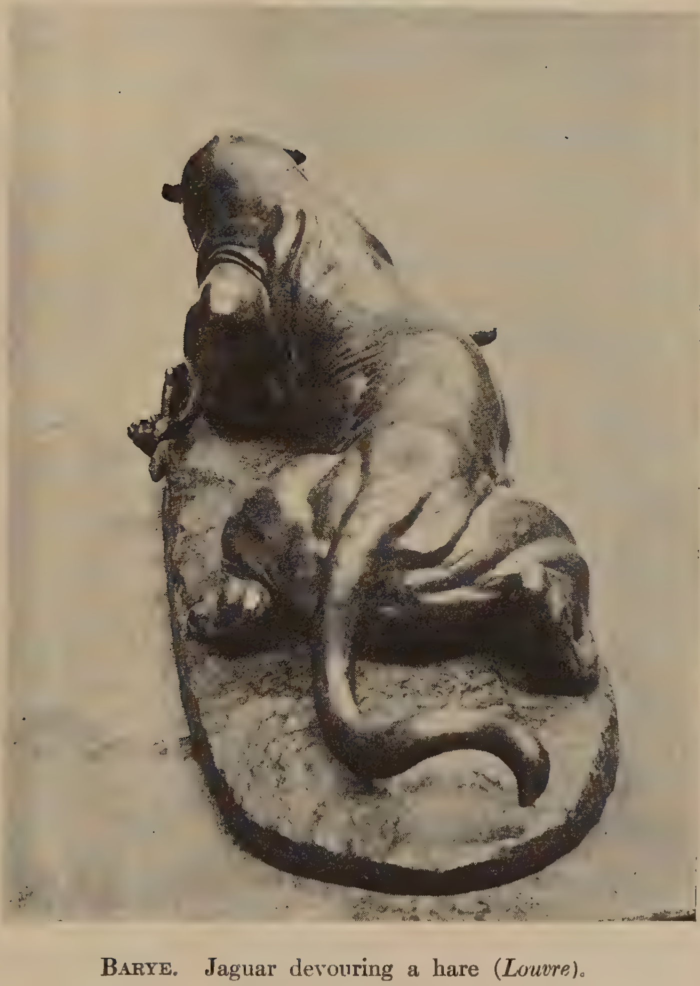
even though it is so controlled, in which the respect for the inner structure is affirmed in order to lend its support to the whole rising century. It is in Italy that Ingres will pass almost all of the first half of that century, where his ardent study of Hellenic antiquity, of the Italian Gothic, and of Raphael will very soon make him conscious of the continuing thrill of life in fresco and in marble, which appears to him like the face of a woman under a half-raised veil; and it is Italy that will deliver him almost entirely from the paraphernalia of archæology and from the narrow dogmatism against which romanticism itself is struggling. Two victories, of which neither Delacroix nor himself will admit the solidarity, and which will precipitate their reconciled influences into the forms of the future.



Barye. Lions near their cavern (*Louvre*).

He came near to seizing the soul of antiquity at its sources, and while Delacroix is bringing to men freedom of sentiment in movement and color, he is preparing for them, with freedom of form, the revelation of true Greek thought which set itself to embrace the living block in its ensemble and to express it, without preoccupation with picturesque detail, through the roundness and the plenitude of the contour. It does not matter that his color, from which the reflection is voluntarily exiled, is oftenest only an attribute applied to the form, although, in most of his portraits, discreet harmonies of deep blacks, the blued and slatey grays of the backgrounds with their slight undulation, and the fineness of his whites touched with pearl, with blue, and with gold, assure him a place between Chardin and Corot. The music is in his line, in which Gluck and Mozart and Beethoven, for whom he has an uncompromising love, would recognize their melody, which is not yet drawn toward the romantic maelstrom, to be swept along by Berlioz, and submerged by Wagner in the orchestral storm of the symphony.

The music is in his line. According to the formula of the School, according to David even, he "draws badly." In his work, men constantly find that the feet are weak, the hands are badly placed, that the necks have goiter, joints are disconnected, and arms and legs a third too long or too short. But it is always to the advantage of the expressive power of the line, which insinuates itself, launches forth, or bends back, in order to give the total feeling awakened in him by his model. He gives a tapering quality to fingers, rounds the limbs, hollows the small of the back, thickens the lips, lengthens the eyes, or accentuates their angle. Drawing, portrait, large picture or small—everything is linear melody, naïvely following the form in its continuous undulation, but, when it receives the shock of the idea suggested by the form, swelling, or prolonging, or caressing,

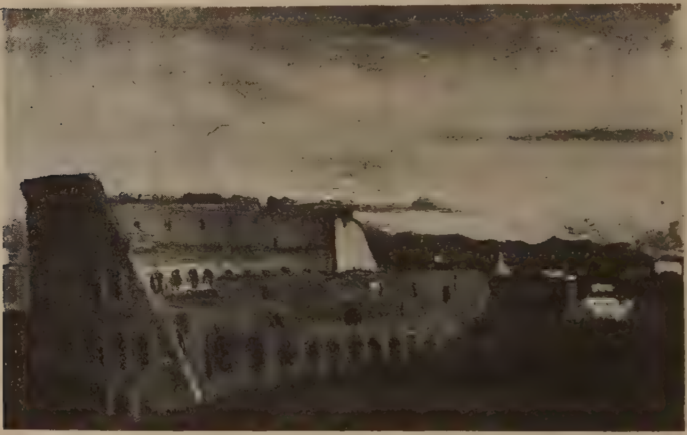


Barye. Jaguar devouring a hare (*Louvre*).

or restraining that undulation in order to impose its meaning. One might here surprise the trace of the romanticist deformation, were it not that he first considered the ensemble, not from the point of view of a dramatic impression to be rendered, but from the point of view of a general idea, objective and pagan, to which his Latin soul and his culture, formed on the antique, have led him. A woman's arm on the back of a chair, a beautiful drooping hand, crossed knees, or a sinuous torso, melting away or coming forward, are never isolated as they attract his eyes; they are only summits of a firm and progressive wave, all of whose contours respond to the sensation which he seeks voluntarily, and finds in the heart of every object.

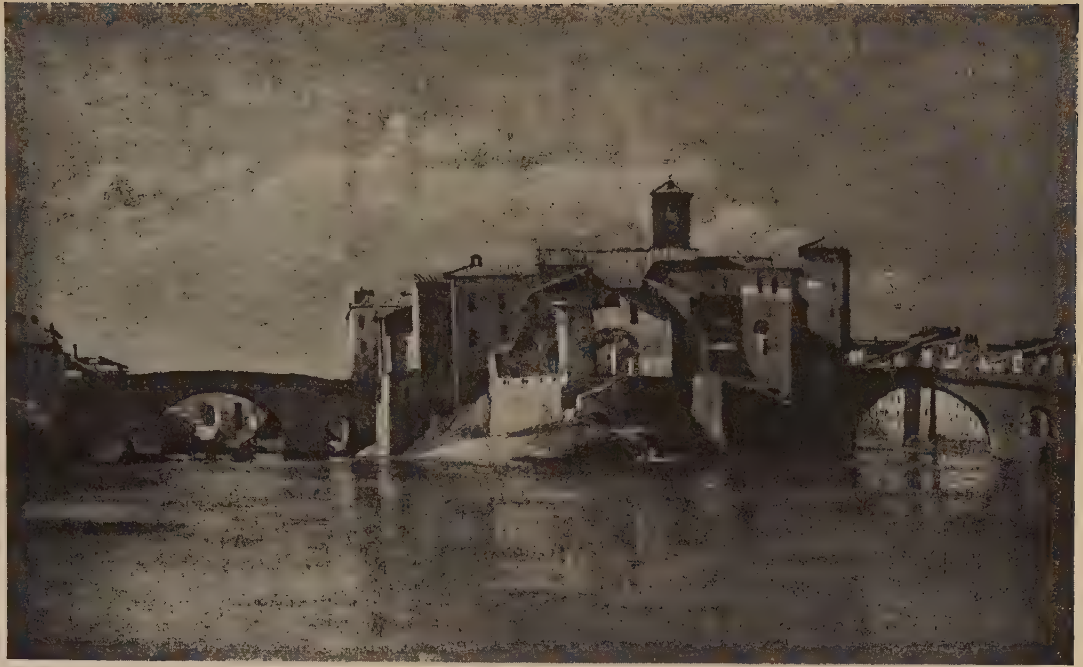
He is haunted by the desire for the feminine body, round, full, and swelling with strength, like a world. It is in him that we find the affirmation of that hymn to woman of which the painters of the eighteenth century had given the outline with more verve than love, but which will assume, in the nineteenth, through Delacroix, through Chassériau, through Corot, Courbet, Carpeaux, Puvis, Renoir, and Rodin, a character of ardor, sometimes adorable and sometimes tragic. One hears it rumbling everywhere in his work, in which, because he has more will power than lyric power, it is clothed with a definitely erotic, and almost animal, meaning. If he were more spontaneously a painter, one would think of Goya. Here, above all, his bourgeois soul breaks forth, with its appetite unrestrained and without inner struggle; neither laces covering the skin, nor trinkets and chains around the necks, nor ample dresses around the waists and the legs, nor subjects drawn from religion or mythology, succeed in concealing this. His Blessed Virgins were first painted nude, and when they have their hands crossed over their heart, one still sees the bending curve of the breast, and the line that grows round on the maturing abdomen. Certainly, before his finished drawings and his allegorical pictures, one might think, and people have thought, that what is called ideal form is the only one that interests him. But his real nature is shown by his thousands of sketches, and it is in these that he is great. In them one sees furrowed torsos and drooping breasts, one sees broad flanks with folds as deep as the bark of a tree, and heavy and burning as fruit. And when he casts his eyes on some illustrious sitter, however austere the costume is intended to be, the person is already disrobed. As man is defined for him by wealth, woman is defined by love. He weighs the bellies of the bourgeois and the bosoms of their wives. How many beautiful heavy arms, emerging from their shawls, with fat hands, and the fingers spreading as if full of sap, which the rings press to the finger tips! How many dewy glances under heavy eyelids, how many moist mouths where voluptuousness trembles! How much warm flesh satisfied under the cold velvet, the stiff satin, and the inert scarf of gauze which does not succeed in masking the languid droop of the trunk, the fat waist, and the neck full of murmurs and of restrained sobs! Some of his large painted sketches draw to the surface of the skin the warmth exhaled by the breasts, and the echo of profound sighs.

Isolated, these portraits and these studies are among the finest things which France has produced. But if he tries to imagine, to compose, to seize the trumpet of heroism, and rise higher than his nature, he is seen as that which he would always have been, if his sensual genius were not there to save his soul: a spirit rather common, or perhaps even one of a slightly low order. As soon as he ventures upon the great symbols and the great myths, he is icy or ridiculous. As soon as he attempts to force them, even in their own direction, to create—with an assembly of women of the harem or with amorous divinities—the poem of voluptuousness realized by his slightest study, his feasts of flesh are without nobility. All he does is to pile up meat. All those fat sides, all those elastic breasts, all those well-rounded thighs, make up a heap of trembling things like swarming larvæ. If one does not isolate a fragment of the picture, there is nothing to connect them with the spirit.



Corot. The Colosseum (*Private collection*).

Here again, in this narrowness of a nature which is very audacious, certainly, very powerful and honest, but limited, he is bourgeois. He represents eighteenth-century rationalism which has come into power and is determined to hold it, even if it must do so by brute strength, and by regarding the lyricism of the romanticists as a kind of canker, caused by demagogues and revolutionaries, which must be extirpated at any price,



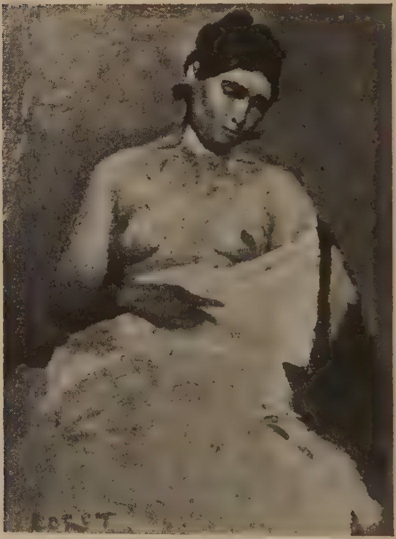
Corot. The Isola Sacra at Rome (*Private collection*).

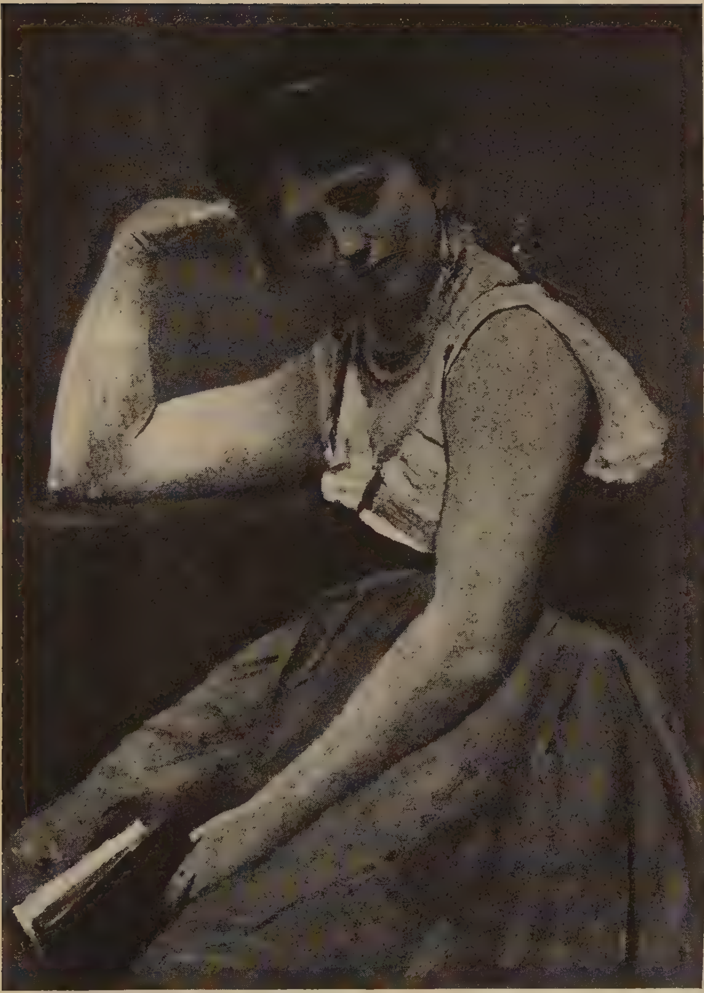
even by making use of institutions and of formulas which he makes no secret of despising. He represents artistic positivism, practically a contemporary of philosophic and scientific positivism, and as restricted in scope and as necessary as they are. It will soon bear its fruits, and will even assume toward the reason of the bourgeois as well as toward the imagination of the romanticist, a rôle of socialistic, anarchistic, anti-Christian opposition by the rabble, in its blind slavery to the religion of "facts."

V

But that will not be without resistance. France has two faces, whose differences and contrasts are attenuated when one looks at them from afar. It is in the very bosom of this positivist rationalism that we find the source of the current which will unite with itself the vast sense-contribution of romanticism, in order to demand that pure science open up to it the world of brute matter. And it is from this rationalism that there descends the current which will separate from pure science or will ignore it totally, in order to continue demanding of structures scarcely the work of the imagination, well balanced, very solid, and very convincing structures, that they express that French idealism which adheres so closely to real things, and differs from them only by the insensible shades of a continual transposition, which spiritualizes them without seeming to touch them. Taine and Renan issue from the same sources, contribute to what is really the same work, but seem to incarnate the antagonism of the two tendencies of the mind. We shall see Courbet and Puvis, the one with his eyes ever on the ground, the other looking ever toward the line of the horizon, revealing to the France of their period her plastic soul, and to such a degree that if one of them had not been born, she would not know herself.

It is thus that between Ingres and Delacroix, between the dominating, conquering bourgeoisie and the prophetic transport of a people whose desire always outstrips the realization due to the idealism of preceding generations, Corot appears as the truest and purest representative of their movement. He shows us neither the enthusiasm of victory nor the powerful egoism of practical results. The desire of the spirit, which brought him into existence, is still clarifying itself in certain men. In him France continues on a broader wing after his flight, but remaining in the straight line that she followed to Chardin, ever since Poussin and Claude Lorrain offered, to the charming and penetrating soul of Foucquet, the architecture of method. Without being aware of it, perhaps, he retains their historic landscape, or rather he renders it vaguely, as a frame to his idylls, ingenuous and anachronistic, without symbols and without pretension. Through Chardin himself, his trail is easy to follow in Vernet, in Ollivier, in Louis Gabriel Moreau, and in all those delicate Little Masters of the century at the end of which he was born. In him, their strength and their charm are to be multiplied a hundredfold, by all the living growth of that century's great events. He experiences the same joy that they had in watching the houses and the trees trembling in the water, the wooded slopes limiting a calm plain, and light clouds in one of those pink skies touched with amber and silver in which northern France recognizes the smile of the light in the grace of her watercourses and the freshness of her fields. Sometimes, the most subtle spirit of the most delicate romanticism haunts the breaking day that he perceives coming through the black stems of the trees, bursts forth through their pure branches which twist like flames, and circulates in their bushy mass, as it hums with light and air and birds. Like Delacroix and like Ingres, he loves music, and the same music as they, but it is especially from Gluck that he will ask the proportion and measure which music can offer to the mind, and to the heart, that which is most pure and touching. Like Chardin, a Parisian also, and a son of lower middle-class people, and like La Fontaine, he will be a grown-up child, in his enjoyment, throughout his life, without close association with the writers and the artists—the good and sublime Daumier excepted—faithful in his family ties, not fond of talking painting, and each evening under the lamp, till he was nearly sixty years old, continuing in the society of his old father and his old mother. He wanders over the French provinces, where, in each place he has modest friends whose names are now unknown; he stays for weeks with them, not troubling anybody, since, except at the hour of the good meals, he is out all day, with his easel and his pipe. He is regularly received at the Salons, for nothing shocks the public, nor attracts it in this purity without brilliance, this firmness without violence, and this apparent impersonality, which continues and crowns the old


Corot. Torso (*Private collection*).

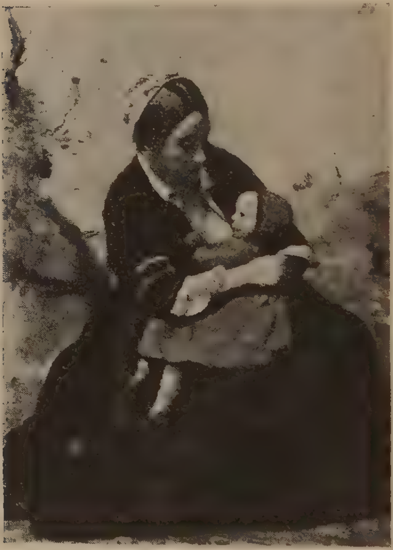


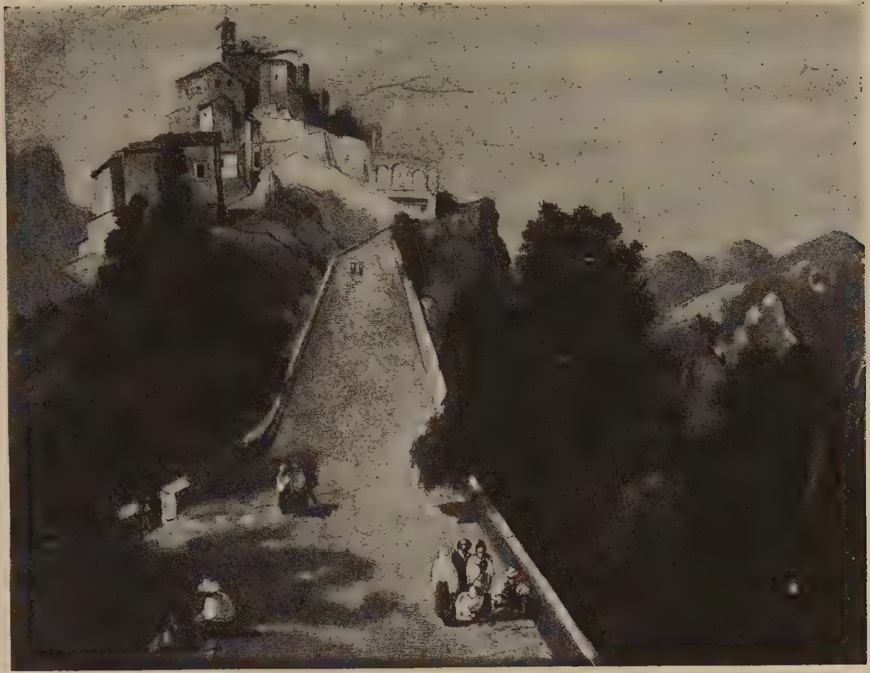
Corot. Reverie (*Louvre*).

French classicism. He is fairly ignorant, but of an exquisite judgment, simple, open of hand and of purse, without rancor, without bitterness, and without envy, of great finesse, and unnoticed as he passes. As he works on his little canvases, he sings, like a house painter. The storms of his heart—and he had some—do not descend into his fingers. He loves, and he admires, but he never makes any outcry, and if, for example, Delacroix is spoken of in his presence, that man who, at the time, represented the loftiest plastic genius of his race, he says with the kind smile on his clean-shaven face, good-natured, broad, and powerful: "He is an eagle, and I am only a skylark. I sing little songs in my gray clouds."

And so he did. He arose at dawn to study the fields, for "the sun extinguishes everything." As soon as the morning mist had fallen, the values asserted themselves in the transparence of the air with their maximum of exactitude, of fineness, and of purity. The morning light, rosy, and so subtle in that Ile-de-France where an impalpable vapor persists, until the golden twilight, making of all space a prism which gives the delicate shades and affording a blond glow as it hangs over everything, flooded the sky and the landscape and streamed over the waters. With the moment which precedes the fall of evening, it is the hour when the air seems to condense its fruity color on trees and stones, to penetrate the trembling firmness of walls, and to marry the tone of the light clouds with that of the soil. The eye of Corot was like a liquid mirror, which reflected faithfully the poetry of those luminous and calm days of France when the rivers, silvered under the silver rain of poplar and willow leaves, the serene air, and the barely undulating line of the hills, seem a crystallization of imponderable harmonies, which the slightest lyric outburst, or the slightest mystic intoxication would shatter. He copied what he saw, but the quality of his vision was divine. It is the halfway meeting place of the objective world in its most unanimously accepted aspects, and of a soul attentively receiving the discreetest and rarest teachings of that world. If the lens of the photographer —by your leave, O Corot!—were endowed with a heart, it is thus that it would doubtless see the world. The world is, indeed, rendered in close likeness; the painter seems to have added nothing to it and taken nothing from it. It seems. . . . For the miracle is precisely the invisible work of the mind transposing the elements of the object to the canvas with so much tact and measure that they do not appear to be modified either in their material, or in their local tone, or in their proportions and their relations. His imagination evolves no new schemes, but in the delicate centers of an exquisite intelligence, the purest revelations of sensibility are associated.

He had made three long journeys to Italy, and no one ever made better use of his time there. Before a too hasty production, immoderately sought for toward the autumn of his career, caused him to forget the lesson of its limpid landscapes and produce too many cottony trees and misty ponds, he had understood how well the structure of the land of Italy and of its cities, as precise, as compact, as trenchant, and as clear as a theorem, could serve him when he should be ready to hold the gentleness, the peaceful coolness, and opalescent light of the French landscape within lines firm enough to reveal it to the mind. He had drawn the denuded vertebræ of Italy, the abrupt contours of its promontories, its trees, straight or twisted, but pure as swords, the straight outlines of the houses and of the citadels, and the continuous crest of the mountains of marble, silhouetted by the fire of the sky. He had meditated before the visions of Canaletto and of Guardi, which move one by their profound purity quite as the strain of a violoncello does. On his journeys, each time that at Fontainebleau, at Ville-d'Avray, at Mantes-la-Jolie, at La Rochelle, at Avignon, at Douai, at Rouen, at Arras, or Chartres, or in the Basque country, he found the close and mysterious union of the line without accidentals, of the impeccable value, and of the tone at once the most exact, the most veiled, and the most rare, he remembered. At every place where a street goes down between two huts, where red tiles show at the edge of a wood, where a firm road runs between two rows of young elms, where an old city outlines its gables and its chimneys against the sky, or where the spires of a cathedral point up through the silvered mist, he remembered the terraces where the houses and the towers roll like amber beads, he remembered the immobility of the stones under the incandescent flame of the light, the spread of the pines above roofs and cupolas, and the ruins gilded by the evening. The intimate poetry of things entered the clearness and the force of his memory. I verily believe that he forgets neither a crevice on a

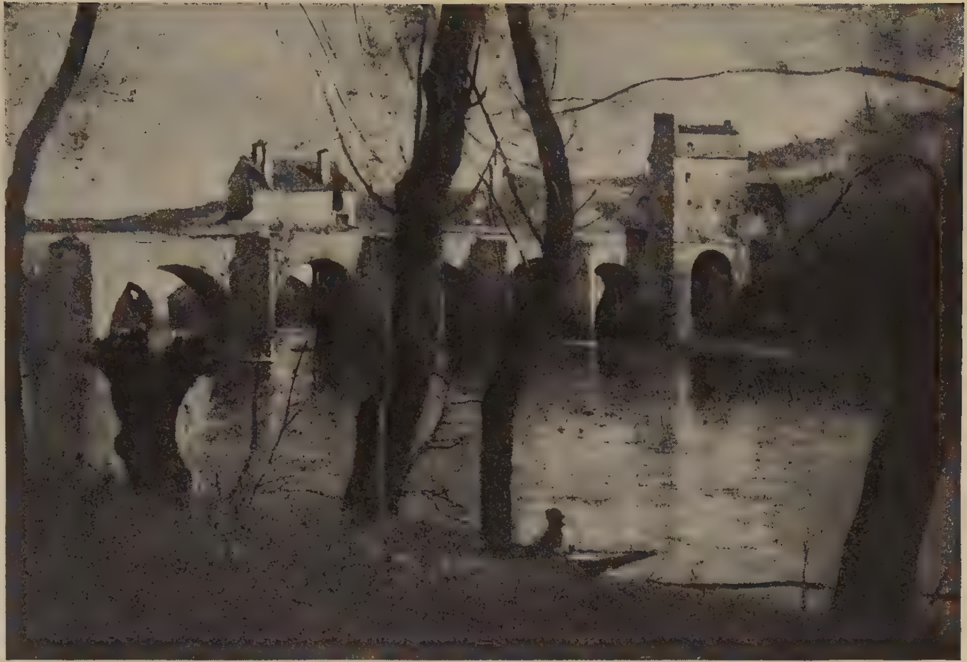

COROT. Maternity
(*Private collection*).



Corot. The Road (*Private collection*).

scaling façade, nor a round window under a drain pipe, nor the last cluster of leaves which trembles on the last branch; but the crevice or the façade establishes a plane, the window appears as a necessary spot, bluish or pearly, in the mauve or the gold of an old wall, and the leaves suspended between sky and water define the immensity of space. The grays and the blues, the golden reds and the pinks, penetrate one another and reply to one another, in a tremble like mother-of-pearl, as they ripen this fruit of France, whose harmony inscribes itself among waves of melody as limpid as the notes of a flute of crystal.

From this admirable and gentle song to the tone of the idyll of antiquity, the distance is quickly traversed. Here are nymphs under the branches and divine silhouettes leaning over the darkened lakes where the branches which spring forth are seen in reverse with the first or the last star, and the cupola of the sky. How many immortal figures he has met near the springs, and under the wide trees laden with drops of water, with aërial murmurs, with twittering and the sounds of wings! How lightly he stepped that he might look at them at ease, as they dreamed or danced, the lyre or the thyrsus in their hand! And with what mute adoration he contemplated their slumber or their games when he surprised them nude, behind some bush humming with bees, or at the edge of some stream wont to reflect heads crowned with flowers in its pure waters! Since Watteau, there had not been in painting a being so profoundly enamored of the touching grace that emanates from the firm flesh of women, whom he painted from afar, like the older master, and with a troubled reserve, seeking, in the undulation of the volume, and in the arabesque without projections, limbs and bodies in which the blood mingles with the pulp of fruits, and which gleam with the caress of



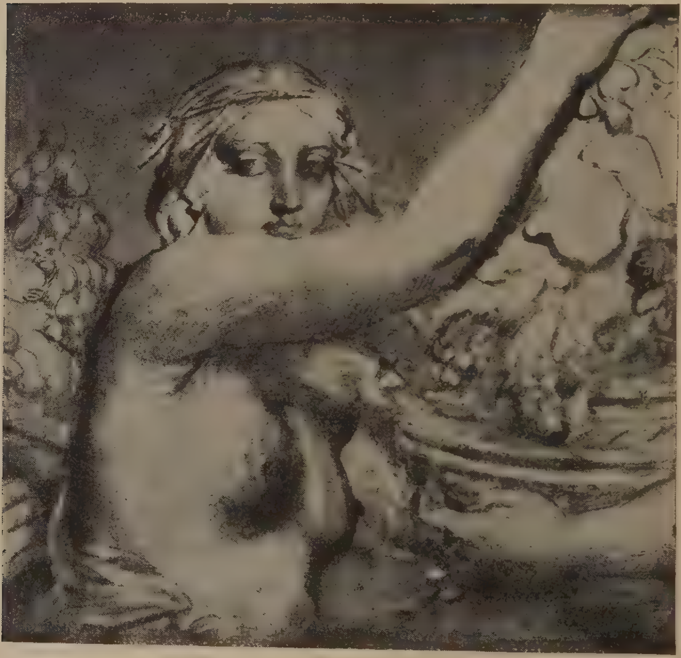
Corot. The Bridge of Mantes (*Louvre*).

amber and of silver. A hymn as chaste as love, where desire takes on a sacred form. The ardent gravity of the lands of the south here again renders the face of woman dark or calm when she is before him, crosses her beautiful hands at her girdle, and gives to the breast and the neck the firmness of marble columns and of round shields. Under the homespun skirt and the crossed neckcloth of the Italian peasant woman, under the gray dress touched with dull reds and pale blues of the young French woman, in all those little pictures which haunt the memory like veiled and merging sounds of violins, oboes, and harps, the form of the antique is divined, in the embrace of the modern soul, reanimated and all atremble at having been surprised once more.

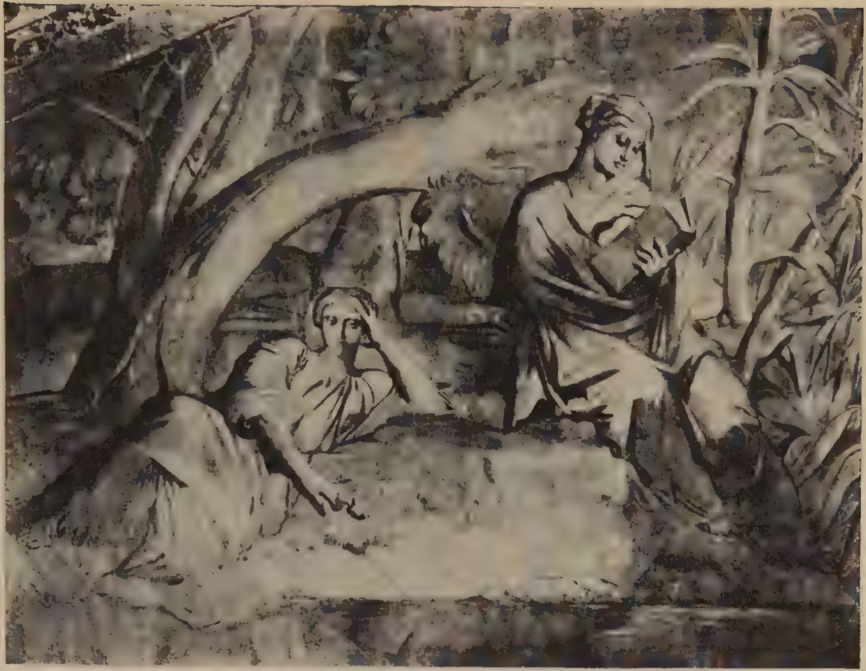
VI

There, then, is French idealism in its most concrete, but also in its most spiritual, expression. To attain this expression, it is useless to spurn as unworthy the desire for matter and the possession of it. To prevent its irresistible rejuvenation, it is useless for this form to hurl itself upon matter, closing its soul and its heart to its loftiest precepts. It is, however, these two simultaneous and parallel movements to which, at the moment when Delacroix and Corot became mature, but also at the moment when scientific civilization affirms itself, the writers and the artists will yield. In England, for example, the protest of the painters against science and its industrial aspects will, under the influence of Ruskin, assume an abstract and literary character, which will cause it to misunderstand and forget painting. In France, the century is fortunately too strong in its painting to stumble in its path. At most, when we approach the final development of what is claimed to be French symbolism, so stammering, so poor, and so submerged under the plastic power of the century, a fragile work will appear, the supreme flower of a culture which no longer possesses anything living or human, and lacks the faculty of revelation and the power of renewal: like so many men of the tragic periods when the mind oscillates between two faiths, Odilon Redon will have every quality of a great painter—and of a great man, nothing. The others accept life and do not go seeking the mystery outside of it, aware that knowledge thrusts back its frontiers and extends it. Corot, who maintains, high and pure, the flame of the spirit in the matter regained and solicited by the spirit, was very glad, I imagine, to make use of the railway in order to reach his painting-ground more quickly. Courbet will not be wrong when he laughs heavily if people talk to him about the soul: but just the same, there will be more "soul" in a square centimeter of the most materialistic of Courbet's paintings than in all the works of the English pre-Raphaelites, of Gustave Moreau, and of Boecklin, put together. When Puvis gathered inspiration from Greek and mediæval legends of the ideal world, as he did, he was not frightened at the sight of telegraph poles.

And so Puvis, amid the current which sends painting to the positivist philosophy of the time, and soon to science itself, to ask for a technique after having asked for moral support, Puvis remains the only one who with a sufficient plastic intelligence maintains French idealism in his means and in his results. To tell the truth, he is far less of a painter than Corot, who unites him, through Poussin, with French tradition. His master, Delacroix, did not transmit to him the sense of pathos and the sense of the mystical in painting, doubtless because that sense is the most personal and the most living of all. Movement and harmony do not flow as a unit and from within; in his painting, the unity of the work is external and of the will; his high culture, alone, among the elements of his vision, creates solidarity, one that is sufficient to satisfy taste, but insufficient to subjugate it. But there is not, in the whole work, a suspicion of literary or symbolical intention foreign to the sentiments which the language of plastics is capable of expressing. And if the instinct of the painter is less vast than his mind, his feeling for decoration lends him a moral force which the Gothic men of Italy seemed to have exhausted.

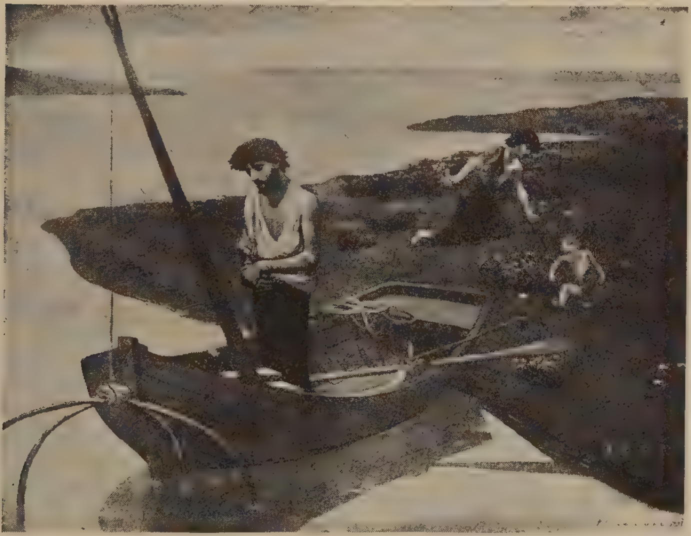


CHASSÉRIAU. The Vintage, detail, decoration of the Cour des Comptes (*Louvre*).



Chassériau. History, decoration of the Cour des Comptes (*Louvre*).

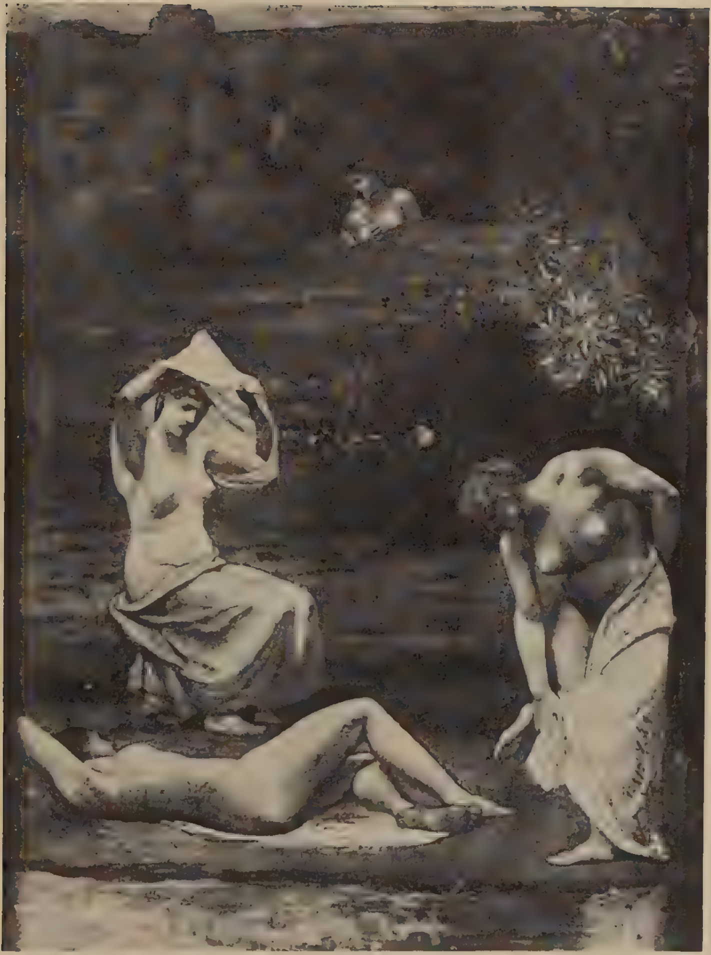
He could not concern himself long with Courbet, his elder by a few years, and whose effort at its beginnings, when he left the atelier of Delacroix, interested him, and always commanded his respect. This somewhat beast-like power must even have revealed to him, by contrast, the secret of his desire. Another painter besides, of the same age as Courbet, revealed to him, at the decisive hour, the great decorative style. Fiery, sensual, intoxicated with love and with painting, the creole Chassériau, celebrated when twenty years old and lacking only, perhaps, a longer life in order to become the greatest painter of his century, was in the very center of the whirlwind in which the wild lyricism of Delacroix and the determined style of Ingres were clashing, influencing all the artists, shaking Chassériau himself and tossing him about without respite, until his death, which came when he had attained the age of Raphael and of Watteau. A life too short, especially if one thinks of its grandiose ambitions, the frescoes in which human forms marry their undulations, like those of rivers or of flowers swaying, with the flowers themselves, with the rivers, with the seaweed, with the branches, with the vines, and with the sheaves, the French poem of Goujon, of Poussin, of Girardon, and of Watteau, unfolding under the burning shadow of the tropical forest, and under the romantic frenzy of death and voluptuousness. A life too frail, a health too precarious for the unforeseen robustness of a plastic intelligence capable of forcing upon the intoxication of his century structural discipline and the heroic grace of the Greco-Latin genius. A life too passionate, perhaps, from which there escaped a fire which returned upon it, and burned it, and permitted to surge up from its fallen ashes the immense splendor of those corollas which grow on some flaming rock, and which one perceives from a long distance, strange, hallucinating, and solitary. When he disappeared, a few ardent compositions, full of the meaning of the great natural symbols—broad flanks, splendor of arms and of knees, the tinkling of jewels and medals, women like some great fruits of the tropics, heavy, ripe, swelling with odorous sap, and giant trees with the wide expanse of their trunks, and their branches like twisting flames—had, at all events, outlined the reconciliation, possible only in a spiritual organism as new and strong as his own, between the two hostile masters in whom the century might have found its decorative expression. Ingres, indeed, from the time of his return from Rome had, with his misunderstanding of reflections, his local tones, his unbroken backgrounds, and his linear rhythms, initiated a type of mural painting which



Puvis de Chavannes. The Poor Fisherman (*Luxembourg*).

neither he nor his pupils ever brought to realization. Delacroix was too much of a painter, too much of a musician, too much enamored of subtle shades and of lightninglike passages, to subordinate his great epic frescoes to the solemn unity and the austere tone of the walls.

Puvis de Chavannes, with far less genius, but perhaps with more patience and, in any case, with more time than Chassériau had, at least attempted the miracle which no one, since Giotto, has wrought completely. With a little more of sensual intoxication in the color, which is held in too close subjection to the bareness of the stone, a little more of plenitude of life, and of accent, in the grand lines which attempted to bring form and gesture back to the simplest architectural rhythm, he would, through the synthesis of his landscapes and through the pale perfection of his well-controlled harmonies, have touched the highest accord to be attained between painting with its life and the monument with its idea. The noble spirit is practically alone on its peak, where a few pale flowers are strewn and where the sounds of the world become tenuous before they reach him. This ruddy Burgundian, sensual but an aristocrat, who loved women, the country, and good wine, ever rises to imaginary constructions which summarize our universe in majestic forms and chastened melodies. There is no surrender to the sensation of the moment. Everything is masterly evocation of the spiritual aspects of the event and of the place. The moon rises at its hour to lend its glow to the saint who watches over the sleeping roofs. The sea is dead for the poor man whom it feeds, and the shore discloses to him only the anæmic flowers of hope and of memory. When he wills it, all the departed or dying civilizations rise from the oceans they have ransacked, in order to tender their submission to the modern world. The angels

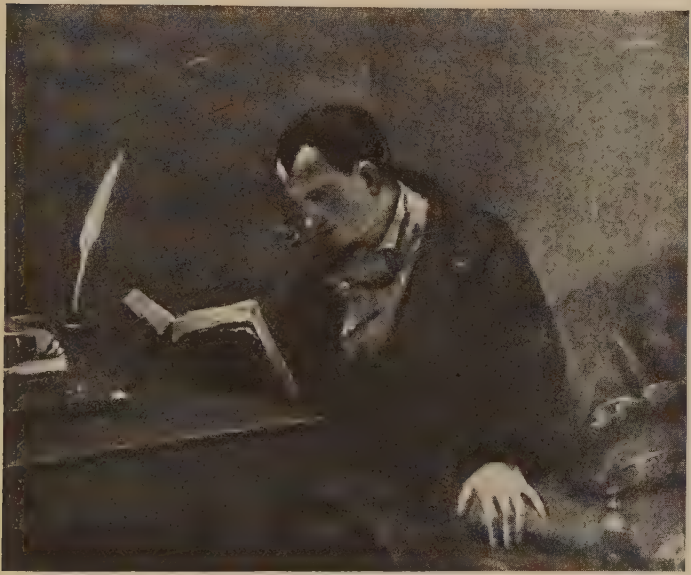


Puvis de Chavannes. Summer (*Hôtel de Ville of Paris*).

fly in a heaven conquered by the industry of men. Let us accept everything, in order to understand everything, he seems to say, and let us spread our two great wings above the miserable quarrels of doubt and of negation. . . . . The trees, isolated and straight, with their open leaves, the bare plains, the calm rivers, the foam and the azure of the sea, the skies which dawn or evening slowly illuminate or darken, the motionless herds waiting for night, and the groups dispersed by labor, games, study, and war, have the grandeur of a prayer offered by an unbeliever to universal life, to thank it for loving him. It is Renan between the Church and atheism, the double and serene protest, of a nature somewhat too voluntarily spiritual, against excessive literary abstraction, and against encroaching sensualism. He has not the faith, but he understands it, and he expresses it. And then he has a noble vision of things, which is also a faith. And the intellectual epic of France, with its calm harmonies, its measured architecture, and its limpid idealism, is unrolled on all these walls between lines of white muses bearing the sword and the lyre, and somber laurel woods.

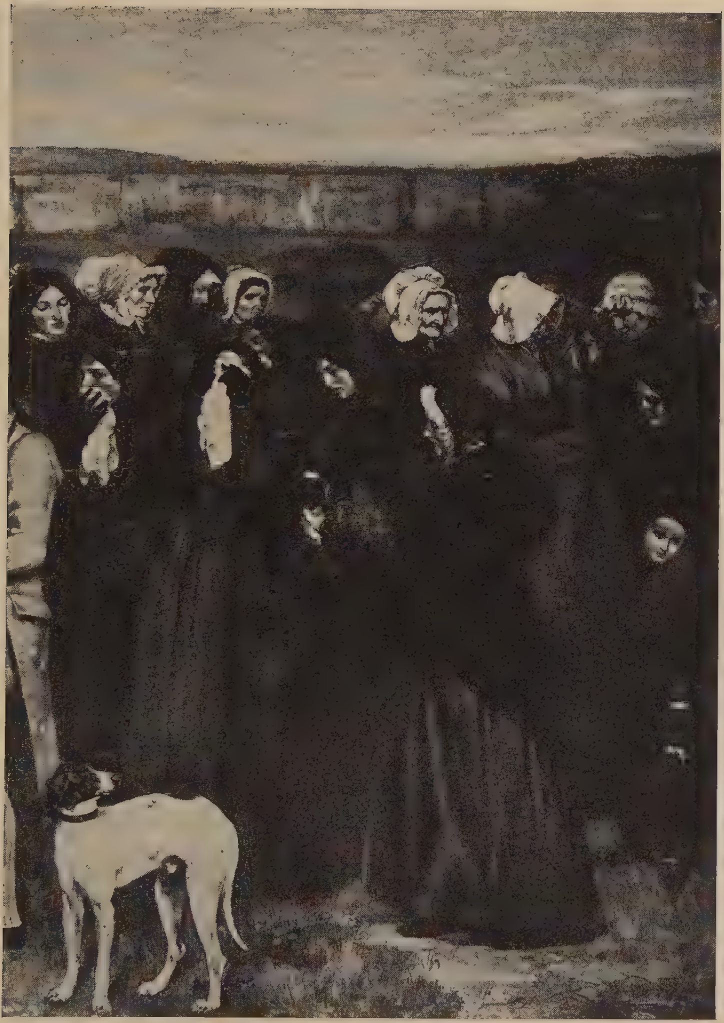
At the other extremity of the universal movement which sweeps French painting onward toward the renewal of its means, Courbet accepts the name of "realist," which is given him in derision. He shouts the word like a challenge, with his drawling voice. Every time that people speak of the ideal, or of imagination, or of beauty, or of poetry, or of mystery, he shrugs his heavy shoulders, picks up his brush and paints a manure heap. He is right. Only, he is too right. He has almost no general culture, he has known no fervent apprenticeship under a master of his profession. At the Louvre, he copies those in whom he finds the direct qualities, which are the only ones he understands, and which he seeks to carry further than they—the Venetians, the

Flemings, and the Spaniards. Anarchistic and self-taught, he of course founds a School, which is to say, a religion. He calls himself the free man, free from the prejudice of æsthetic education, even while he himself is in search of culture and of government. And he reproduces the faults and the blemishes of cultures and governments in their decay. He copies the pictures of the masters as faithfully as he thinks to copy nature, and carries over into his art the blackened backgrounds of the canvases in the museum, their opaque shadows, and all the foreign substances that age and dirt have deposited on their surface.



COURBET. Baudelaire (*Montpellier*).

By good fortune, his craftsmanship is tremendous. He copies the splendor of flesh, the great gray skies, the brooks under the leaves, the vast trees, the foggy sea and its breaking waves, with as much application, exactitude, and force as he does the bitumen and the rancid oil of the masterpieces which he ill understands. He does not compose, he does not transpose; with black, white, blood, a little gold and clay, his trowel plasters the object under his broad eyes, those of a somnolent, sensual animal ruminating slowly, with a few obscure ideas, and with powerful sensations. He has a gluttonous delight in mixing his thick paste, and the stories he builds up are rudimentary—a country burial, drinkers around a table, stone breakers, or women sifting wheat—which leave a remembrance, dull, very tenacious, however, and sometimes very moving. He believes himself to be bringing romanticism to a brutal close, and he uncompromisingly preserves its antithesis, by opposing blacks and whites, a process easy to conceive and difficult to execute, but with which he plays with a grandiose breadth, as no one had since Frans Hals. Sometimes he thereby reaches depths which extend in veiled and heavy sonorities to the center of the eternal and simple feelings of the heart, like the lowest and purest notes wherein the violoncello and the human voice unite their passion. He knows how to make a drama, direct, present, and of a bare and somber gravity, with the handkerchief which a widow's hand holds to her face as she weeps, and which makes a white spot against her black veil. He knows how to unite there with great livid clouds, a low gray cliff, a few powerful reds, and a few mortuary emblems which carry into the mournful provincial gathering the sumptuous echo of the mystic symbols and of the death-feasts of love and of memory. He does not do this purposely, I should say. He copies. But perhaps, on that day, he writes—with nothing but dark garments, a little white linen, a few women



COURBET. The Burial at Ornans, detail (*Louvre*).

weeping and with bowed heads, some ordinary spectators, a grave digger, a grave in the clay, and a sad and leaden landscape—the most powerful epic of the family in the history of painting.

Such is the man, knowing no fine distinctions, almost coarse, though he has strange flashes, and—his portraits of Proud'hon, of Berlioz, of Baudelaire, and of Vallès are witness to this—though he is attracted toward the mind, like a big woodland insect that flies in, with a buzz of wings, through the open window into lighted rooms. Such is this magnificent painter. Everything that is animal, close to the earth, and the earth itself, in its torpid and obscure life, he recounts with a single and certain power which will not stir. A joy that is sensual and vulgar, but a thousand times stronger than grace, stronger than taste, and stronger than the sense of shame, weighs upon the work, often reaching a point of stifling the air in it till it cannot be breathed, and sometimes deadening the very paint and rendering it crude, heavy, and with no more reflection than comes from lead. The leaves of the trees are almost always without a tremor, and the trunks without nourishing humidity, but around their thick-set robustness heavy shadows are spread, in which the heat of the day collects over the motionless springs and the little sleeping beasts. The oxen plunge into the burning grasses, their eyes half closed, beautiful women stretched on the ground have big folds of moist flesh at their wrists and at their white necks which disappear into the opening of the bodice, and powerful legs under the dress which is sometimes turned up to the knee. When the woman is quite nude, he is uplifted by a kind of massive and radiant lyricism. He pursues her firm curves and the light and shadow, to make of them a single block, solid and full as a living marble. The splendid bellies and the hard breasts breathe in it, between the white arms and the loosened red hair, with the calm of a mountain plain stretched out in slumber. Other creatures of love seek, under the dense boughs, the water known to the creatures of the woods, in which to soak their skin, whose fat luster placidly attracts the eye of the male. The poem of matter marches on, heavy and slow as a plow. Courbet will drive it along to the end of his one broad furrow, whose dark gleam is like that of a damp and heated soil. In his passing, he will have mowed down the whole romanticist Illusion which had been lived through by two or three great painters, but which sinks to earth as soon as they die, because it was not supported by a sufficient mass of reality. The reality which he brings to replace it will go down with him, because it did not take sufficient account of Illusion, and when he has exhausted his reality, art disappears.

The prisoner of another Illusion, the materialist Illusion, Courbet constantly confused realism of language—which belongs to all the masters capable of remodeling the world in their minds in order to project it beyond them as its living symbol—with the realism of the subject. And in order not to become the slave of the Ideal, he became "the slave of the model."[1]

This atheist, with an asceticism which, to be sure, troubled him but little, because it was natural, interdicted transposition, which liberates the creative genius and causes it to enter the plane of the universe. He did not know that reality resides far more in the nature of the artist than in the nature of his subject. He did not know that life resides not only in the epoch, but also in the faculty of incorporating with memory, with the imagination, and with knowledge, the characteristics of the epoch. He did not know that life is not in the object alone, but in all the sensible rela-

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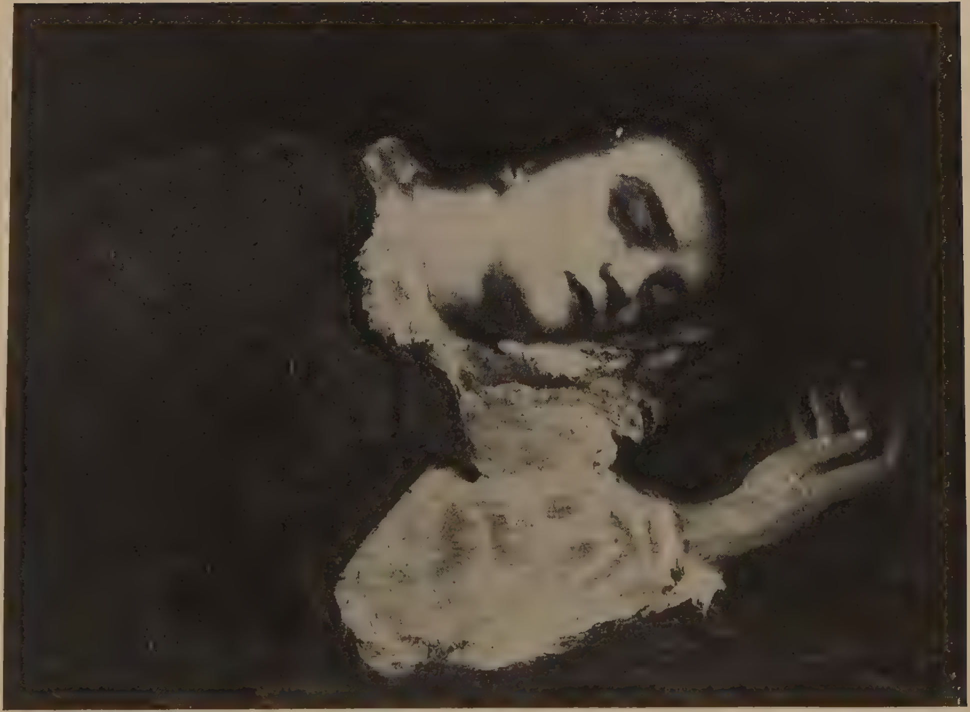
[1] Th. Sylvestre, *loc. cit.*

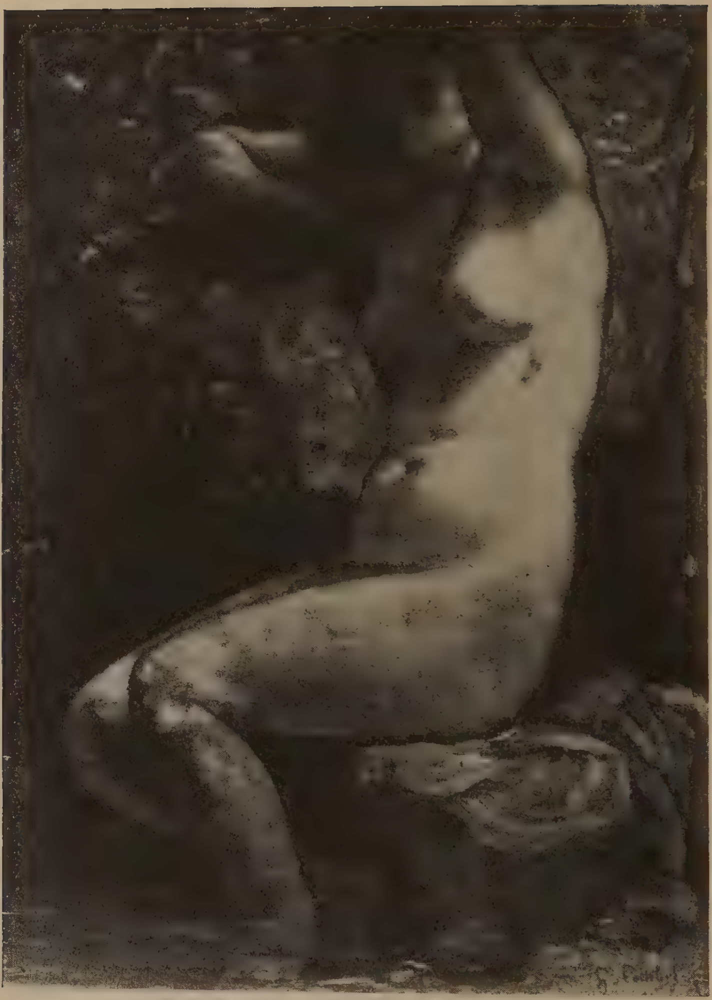


COURBET. Woman sleeping, study (*Private collection*).

tionships of all the objects among themselves, and in their intuitive relationships with him who contemplates them. He did not know that it is from this precisely that painting derives its lyrical character, or, as Baudelaire calls it, its "supernatural character." But by that very ignorance, he assured the fecundity of the future.

VII

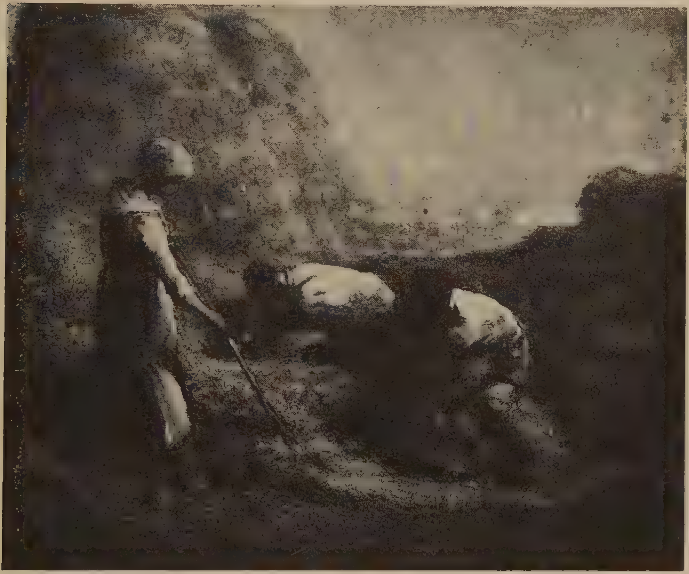
Science had been advancing for half a century. The "fact" itself had been left behind. Progress of a profound nature was being made in the analysis of matter, and each day brought forth some practical miracle. The mind carries on all its elements together, in a block. The science and the art of a given period are never more than particular modes of expression, distinct in their characteristics, but, through their spirit, belonging in common to all the men of that period. The unexpected results of the application to industry and to social life of the discoveries of chemistry, of electricity, and of mechanics were making an impression upon the mobile imaginations of the artists before all the others, and although by habit they are far removed from the utilitarian movement of the century, they showed themselves this time strongly disposed to accept its guidance. The literary men meet at the lectures of Claude Bernard. The painters interest themselves in the discoveries of Chevreul, who really does no more than prove that which had already been guessed by Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese, Greco, Rubens, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Watteau, Chardin, Reynolds, and Goya, that which was known by Constable and Delacroix, but which, when rigorously demonstrated, will enchant the French mind, enamored, even in the domain of the creative imagination, of clear reasons and of visible truths. The literary constraint to which the



COURBET. Woman bathing (*Private collection*).

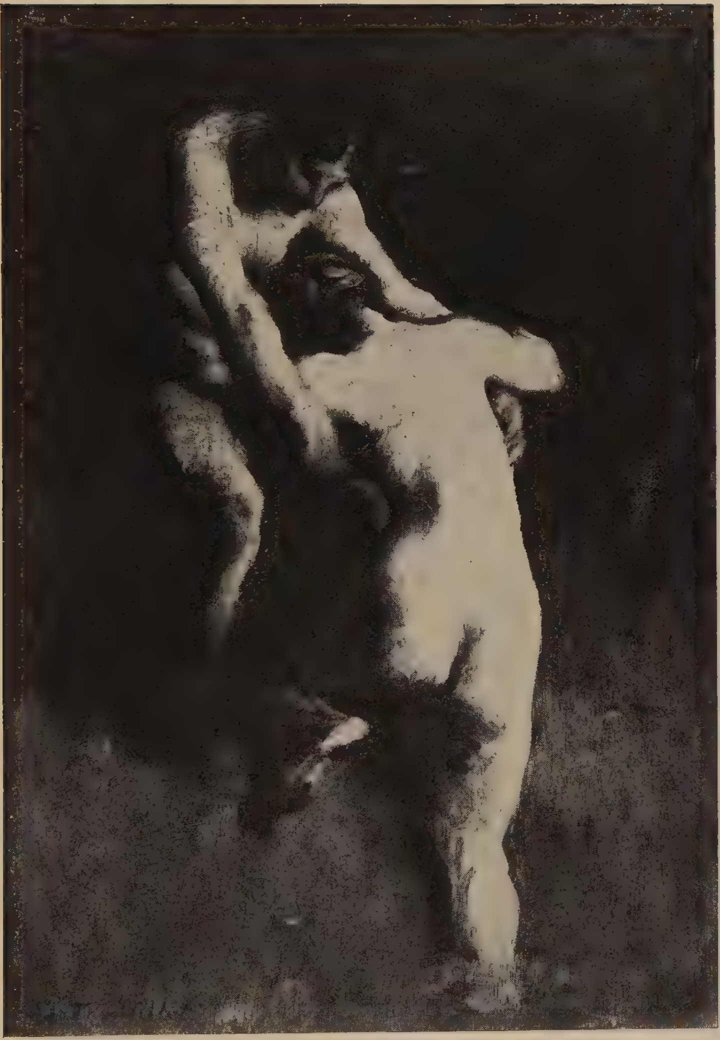
romanticists submitted yields, after Courbet, to scientific constraint, and the artist passes almost without transition from the prison of the subject into the prison of the object.

This attempt to return to sources had nothing new about it save its scientific method, which, indeed, was what rendered it decisive. At the very time of the antagonistic triumphs of Ingres and of Delacroix, the painters had left the studios and the Schools to return to "nature," in an outburst of sentiment, whose first origin must be sought in the influence of the *Nouvelle Héloise*, the *Confessions*, and the *Contrat Social.* The city was a place of perdition for the man of sensibility. He could renew the innocence of his vision only by



Millet. Haymaking (*Louvre*).

contact with the earth itself, source of the eternal youth of forms in metamorphosis, and of the heart, to which it gives back calmness and purity. An excess—the opposite of the abuse of the Museum and of the creative excitation of the cities—it was an ascetic assent to keep turning in the same circle, to see nothing of the desires and the urge of one's epoch, and to drug oneself slowly with the opiate of a personal formula, and with the increasing shadow of habit and forgetfulness. Delacroix is far more solitary at the center of the brutal cities which he forces to gravitate around his own mind, than are these romantic peasants, exiling themselves in the solitude of the woods, and in the stifling desert of a sentiment which dries up in advance the springs that the fever of living would open up in them each day. A landscapist—Michel—is so solitary that his very life is almost unknown, although the soul of Rembrandt sometimes crosses his path. Two painters remain at Barbizon throughout their lives. Rousseau, so moving at times, when he uses only his pen and notes his direct impressions, those that one keeps for oneself—measured, balanced, clear cut, musical, and composed like all those which the French masters of drawing have left us, from Claude and Poussin to Vernet and Corot—Rousseau falls asleep at the edge of his eternal marshes, whose color, of an uncertain violet, he finds again in the solitary oaks and the moist twilights where his sadness seeks a poetic intoxication, ending in ennui. Millet believes—or rather people believe since the time of Millet—that the reading of the Bible suffices to give them the sense of the world, and that poverty, simply and stoically borne, will render him worthy to sing of the existence of the lowly among whom he lives. A double error, from which there will be no escape, either in his feeling for the country—now epic, now Virgilian, or in his cult of



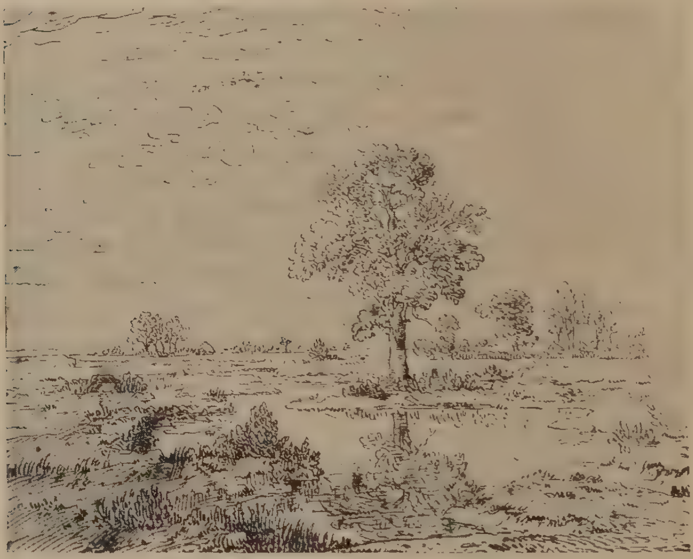
MILLET. Women bathing (*Louvre*).

Michael Angelo and of Poussin, or in his admiration for Delacroix, or in his friendship for Daumier, who comes alone from Paris, from time to time, to brandish the flame of his genius over Millet's obstinate habits. It is true that he plowed, when a boy, and that he went about in a blouse and in wooden shoes, but that is of no importance to us. It is true that during a journey in Auvergne, that arid and austere country, stained like an old cloak, he scrupulously studies the inner structure of the earth, and produced some admirable images, as pure as a Japanese drawing, as firm as a German drawing. It is true that in his peasant Georgics, there are reapers bending with the same movement, sowers with their lengthening shadow, men driving their spades into the ground, and all those simple figures of the noble, sad fatefulness of labor, with the feeling of sculptural expression in the forms, which exist in space solely through their broad surfaces and their expressive planes. But with him, this feeling is more poetic than plastic, and too often, when we descend beneath the plane of the idea, the form sounds hollow. And if his drawing is always sober and sometimes decisive, his painting—save for a few superb exceptions, the "Rainbow," the "Church," the "Harrow," and two or three splendid portraits—is muddy and dull. Of all those herds under the moonlight, of all that smoke of half-hidden villages, of all those muffled voices heard at the level of the furrows, and of all those distant murmurs of the "Angelus" and of faint bells, perhaps there will remain one day no more than a few broad flashes, caught by four strokes of the pen, and the memory of a power misled by being put at the service of a sensibility which we must respect, and of the artist's touching character.

If Daubigny, a good landscapist, had not gone to initiate himself in the beauties of the country close to

Rousseau and Millet, they would have exercised no influence upon the painters whose art was born at the meeting place of Courbet with scientific and literary materialism. And again, that influence is more moral than sensuous. The men who decide to turn their backs upon the School and the studio, in order to wipe from their eyes the soot of the museums and to ask of outdoor light the secrets of harmony, could not fail to hear that long protest against doctrinaire painting which was arising from the entire century, from Ingres, from Daumier, from Delacroix, and from Courbet, but which the pure landscapists expressed with more ingenuousness, if not with more force, than the others. Pissarro, enamored of theories and of systems, first of all follows Corot and Millet, and it is because he will set up his easel in a furrow, before a plowman with his plow, or before a herd of cattle, that he gradually discovers the nature of light and the quality of shadow, and on these discoveries builds the painting of the morrow.

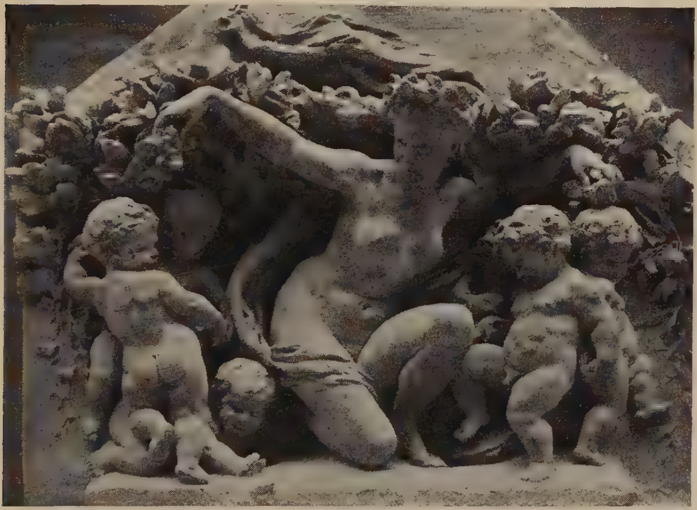
The studio, the room where one paints, or even the falsified light of the street, all mask the object. The external world alone exists, man excepted, and only outdoor light reveals it as it is. Delacroix, to be sure, is a master; he rediscovered the laws of contrast and of association of colors which had almost been lost, but his imagination whirls him too high and too far, and carries his painting to a point where it is merely a symbolic expression—a step further, and it will be a literary expression—of the universe. And then he paints in the studio, and from memory. Courbet also, although he gets the facts, at least, and expresses them without commentaries. Millet and Rousseau certainly go to the open fields to seek their subjects, and in full daylight, but they limit themselves to making sketches, and then they come home and in the sad light of a cottage or under a lamp, they plaster away at their Christian Georgics and their idealized oaks. Paul Huet sees the fields, the forest, and the sky only through a voluntarily dramatic feeling, whose majestic and grandiloquent melancholy exasperates the young men, who have been brought up in the idolatry of the naked truth and in the increasing noise of the victory of science over mystery, over doubt, over subjective lyricism, and even over lyricism as a whole. Corot, to be sure, has a passionate sentiment for space and for light, but even he paints from pencil- or pen-sketches, which he combines at home; besides, one sees very little of his painting; he keeps the best of it in his studio, the remainder goes to the dealer. And then all have habits from which even the greatest have not



Rousseau. The tree, drawing

been able to rid themselves, and which nature, when directly interrogated, only rarely justifies, save under artificial illuminations and confined atmospheres: they oppose shadow to light everywhere, and connect all their tones by a gamut of intermediate semitones which are not to be derived from daylight.

Pissarro, who is becoming more and more unwilling to paint anywhere but in the open air, and who carries with him certain friends[1]—Claude Monet, Renoir, Sisley, and later Cézanne—discovers a young painter, Edouard Manet, who does not always paint out of doors, but who is the first man in Europe to have the audacity to lay one light color on another light color, to reduce the semitones to their minimum, or even to ignore them, and almost to suppress modeling by



Carpeaux. Flora, high relief (*Tuileries*).

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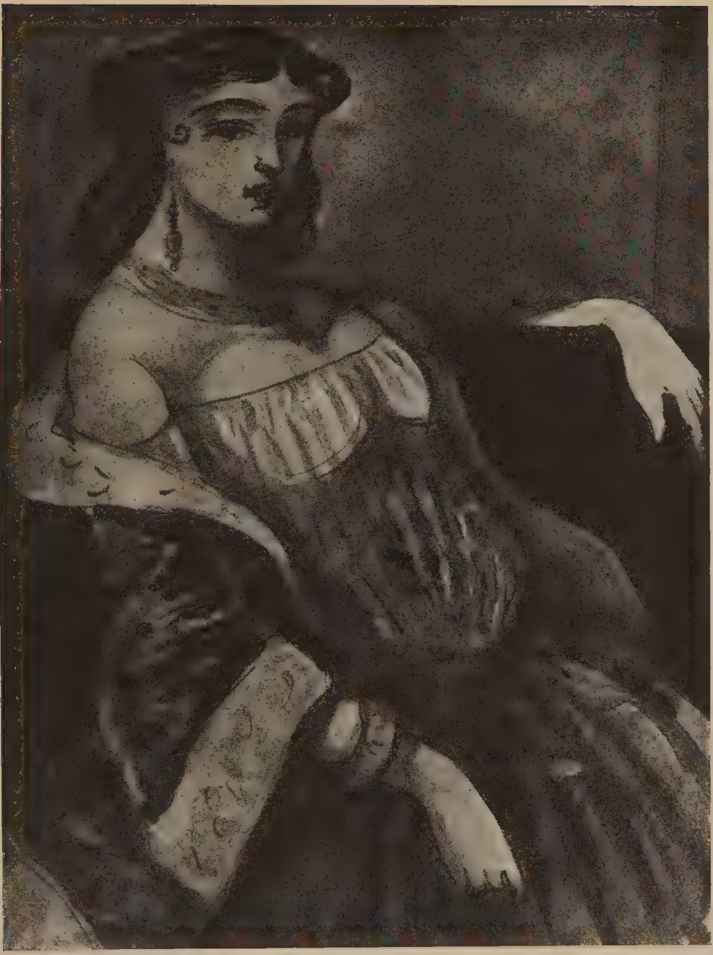
[1] About 1862.

juxtaposing or superimposing strokes bound by a line, which is very firm, but which detaches from a background purged of shadows that might serve as adjuncts. It is primitive painting in one sense, with brutal illumination from in front, a sheet of diffused light falling straight down and revealing the objects in brilliant silhouettes placed one on another, or one beside the other, like big pieces of cardboard or of cloth, and cut out clear in the full light.

It is a downright, violent, uncompromising painting, that runs counter to the whole of the routine education which, since the Renaissance, has been given to the eye by the smoke and flame of the museums, and every time that it appears in public it creates an uproar. It is a revolutionary painting which, in order to return to the sources, in order to temper the art of painting in them once more, dares to suppress certain of its profoundest acquisitions for the purpose of establishing it on fresher ground and of strengthening the tradition.

A Parisian of Paris, and belonging to a family of the old middle class, a pupil of Thomas Couture (a painter without intelligence, but gifted, and sometimes powerful) fed on Ingres and Delacroix and saluted by them in his initial efforts, he was perfectly acquainted with the masters; but he had gone instinctively toward those in whom he found anticipated the justification of his boldness, the Spaniards, the Flemings, and Frans Hals above all, who merely for the joy of the eye, without any pretext to anecdote, or the picturesque, or literature, combined colors with the swift movements and the infallible sureness of a woman assembling flowers, or sorting out materials for a dress or a hat. He studies Goya also, the magician who, in a second, by the combination of a few limpid tones, brings out of the void a hand, an arm, a look, a flower, or a violent hallucination. Manet goes to see their work in the

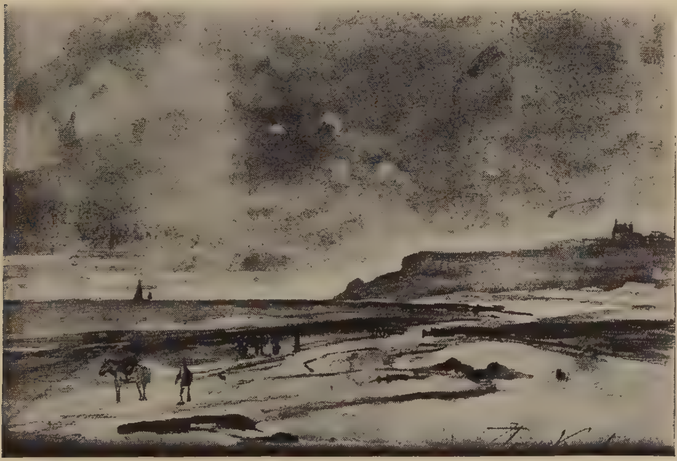


C. GUYS. Woman seated, water-color (*Private collection*).

place where it was done, and after that he knows his way. Rose on rose, white on white, in strokes that live—the whole thing shimmers like a bouquet; everything sings, nothing marks out the form as projecting, because nothing opposes it among the clear tones in the space surrounding it or grading off behind it in the backgrounds. The picture sings rather loud at times, but it never sings false.

This almost complete suppression of the passage, of the intimate echoing of one tone in the neighboring tone, this vision, pure and cruel, which presents the world like a sheaf of living flowers, gives to Manet's painting a certain lack of continuity, a sense of clashing like a broad piece of light-colored material, in which different pieces, one as light as another, had been sewn in, here and there. The flesh, even that which contains the mouth and the eyes, is of no more importance to him than the pink of the cravat standing out against the black coat, the red slash made by the book whose blood color contrasts with the yellow carpet, the bed sheet with its blue reflections, and the reflections he sets trembling in the mirror of the glasses and of the knives. It is an immense still-life, a trifle scattered, a trifle disjointed, but of such power that, forty years afterward, it is still the channel for the invasion of painting by color and, behind color, the incursion of all the audacities, all the splendors, all the shining and fierce brilliance of the Orient.

And then, of the great painters, since the all too rare essays of Watteau and of Chardin (for Debucourt is only a chronicler, penetrating, witty, and tart, and Boilly is only a spinner of tales of every-day life, with all his simple good humor and all his fine shades), he is the first to seek in the street itself, in the cafés, and in the public gardens the plastic and living emotion which he will interpret directly. And since he is strolling about for three quarters of the day and working the other quarter, like a good, improvising, inquisitive Parisian, he is finding, at every moment, things he was not even looking for. By no means is this any longer the dramatic street that Daumier evokes so powerfully in the burning mud in which he sculptures; it is the street without transposition, with its diffused light, its lively colors, the shimmering mosaic of its flags and of its show windows; it is the café with its tables and its plate glass, its smokers, and its rouged women, and the garden with its groups under the trees, clamorous spots in which the garments, the hands, the hair, and the faces break and re-establish the harmony in a vigorous disorder. Eugène Lami, to be sure, is a fine painter of the movements of the streets, of the race tracks, and of the gardens, but the pomp and the setting overpower his style. Constantin Guys is the only one at that period who knows also how to see forms

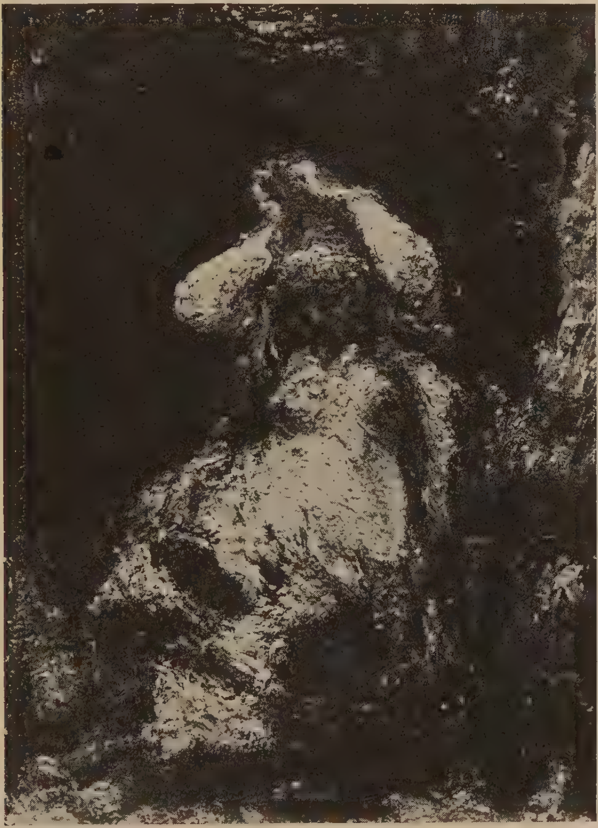


Jongkind. Marine, water-color (*Private collection*).

passing through the dust, as in a dream, the quiver of the sunlight, and the scintillation of jewels and of lamps, and who has left eternal images of the instant caught in its flight. But the art of Manet, which has less of profundity, less of style, and less of mystery, has more of singularity and more of innovating audacity, and it exerts infinitely more influence on its time. And then this is not a matter of sketches in an album; this is a question of great painting. Limpid painting, washed in like a water-color, as hard and cool as a faïence, as full of diversity as a basket full of woolen yarns, as living as a field of flowers, and as firm and pure in form as a Japanese lacquer.

VIII

Manet reveals to Pissarro the secret of painting frankly and without shadows; Pissarro, in turn, carries Manet with him to the fields, and shows him by his example, and especially by that of the virtuoso of the group, Claude Monet, that the open air suppresses not only modeling, but the very contour of the forms, and substitutes for local tone an infinite interchange of dancing reflections, tangled and indivisible, wherein the form hesitates and is submerged in the tide of the universe. Manet, following his new friends, will, after that, paint but little save in the open air. There shall be no more studies combined in the studio, whose attenuated and mournful light stifles the vibrations of open space, changes the color relations, renders pronounced the fixity of forms to the detriment of their moving surfaces, and condemns the eye to return, little by little, to its old habits of progressive gradations from the too artificial light to the too gloomy darkness. Now you plant your easel right out in the fields, and carve out a section of nature for the picture, which shall be painted all out of doors. Here is the woodland of Courbet, with its green penumbra and its dark leaves spreading over pebbles and brooks. But the sun pierces

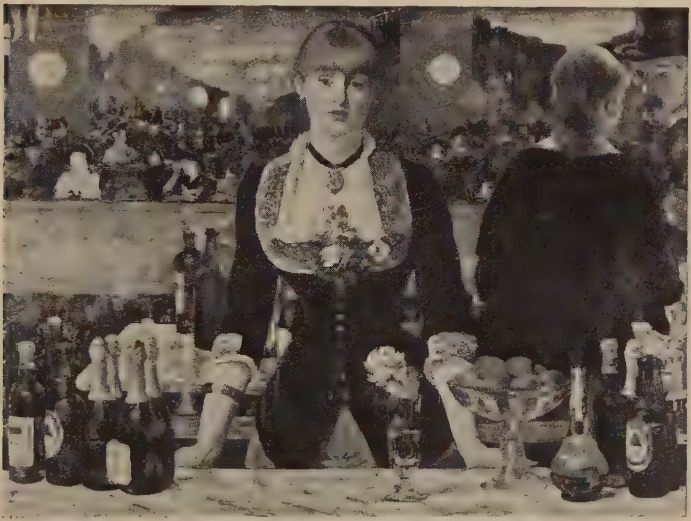


MONTICELLI. A woman (*Private collection*).

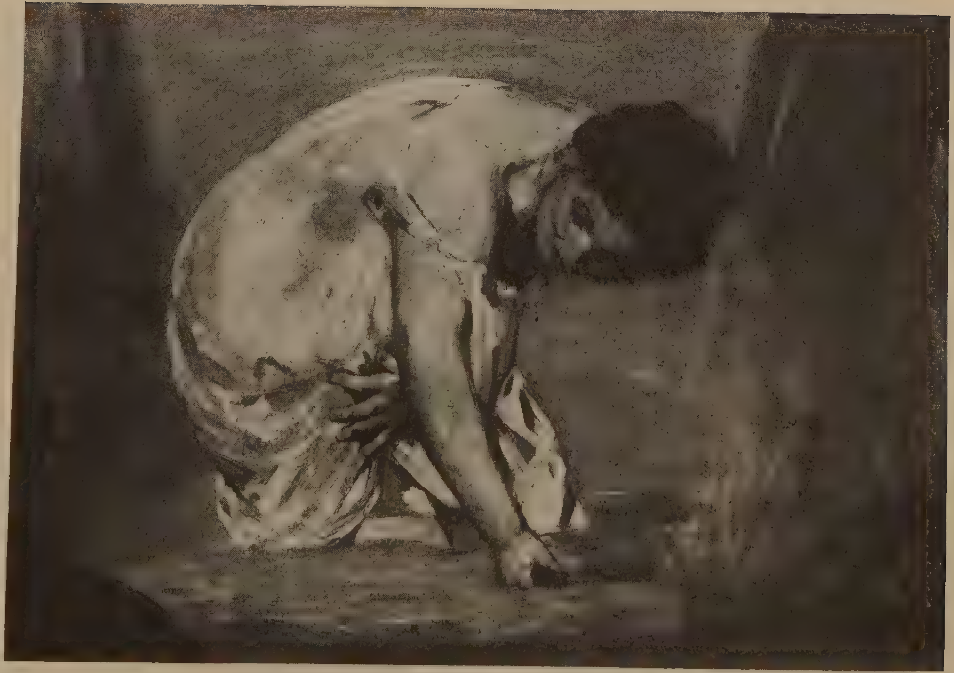
the branches, sends upon earth and flesh bright, moving spots, and the shadow vanishes. Then the eye of the painter, at first dazzled by the sun's illumination, becomes steadier, insists, gradually recovers its vision, and distinguishes a phantom of shadow where at first it could no longer see anything. The shadow itself is light, it is transparent, it is airy, and the colors of the prism, according to the thousand tones standing next to one another, and according to the angle of the light, are decomposed in the shadow and transmuted there into gamuts of ever subtler shades which no one had ever observed before. Soon the object no longer has its personal color; the play of sun and shadow, all the wandering reflections in their network, and the variations of the season, of the hour, and of the second, impressed by the passing of the wind or the interposition of a cloud, sweep over the surface of the object a thousand changing and mobile tones which turn the husk of the world into a vast moving drama.

When the young men will have seen Boudin's paintings, in which the sea air holds in its meshes rigging and sails, and trembles with the vapor and the spray, when they have studied the water-colors of Jongkind, the Hollander, in which air, water, ice, and clouds are one liquid gulf, as deep as the ocean and as transparent as the sky, when Claude Monet and Pissarro have discovered, in London, the dancing fairyland of the wedding of the sun, of the twilight, of the mist, and of the sea, with which Turner's canvases dazzle the eyes, the renewal of painting will have been effected in their instinct. While Pissarro is striving to formulate principles, and recommends choosing the spectrum colors alone, proscribing any mixing of them, and advising that they be juxtaposed or crossed in separate, comma-like spots, Sisley, Claude Monet, Renoir, and Cézanne practice their eye upon the discovery of the incessant movement on the surface of life, and its changes from minute to minute, depending on the march of the sun and of the infinite and trembling gulf of subtle passages, of complex reflections, of lights in their interchange, and of the fleeting colorations for which the universe of the air is forever the theater.

Pissarro continues his apostleship into the inhabited landscape. Painting the red roofs, half-seen behind the apple trees, and the low hills edged by the curtain of the poplars and by the river, he demonstrates that even when, by means of a severe technique, one obtains the maximum of aërial vibration and of luminous splendor, one may remain the most discreet poet of the intimacy of things, the friend of poor houses, a man who knows that the trees have a thousand admirable adventures between their winter poverty and their summer wealth, a man who tenderly unfurls the humble movement of the plants grown on the hill slopes, and their spontaneous and mobile harmony, always



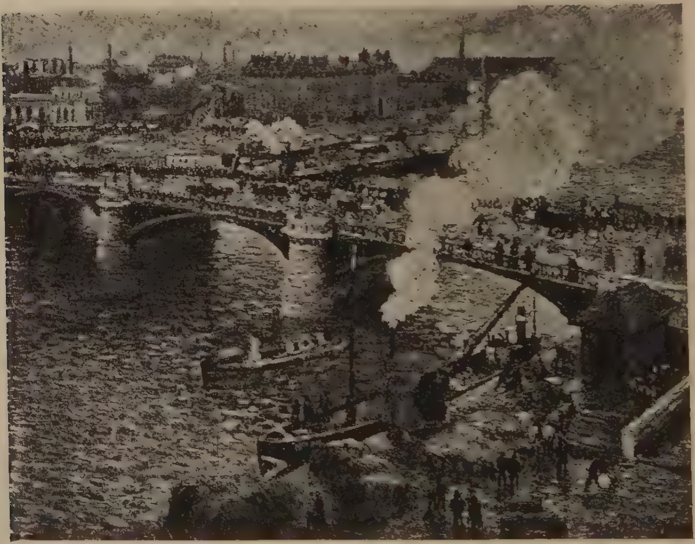
Manet. The Bar of the Folies-Bergères (*Private collection*).



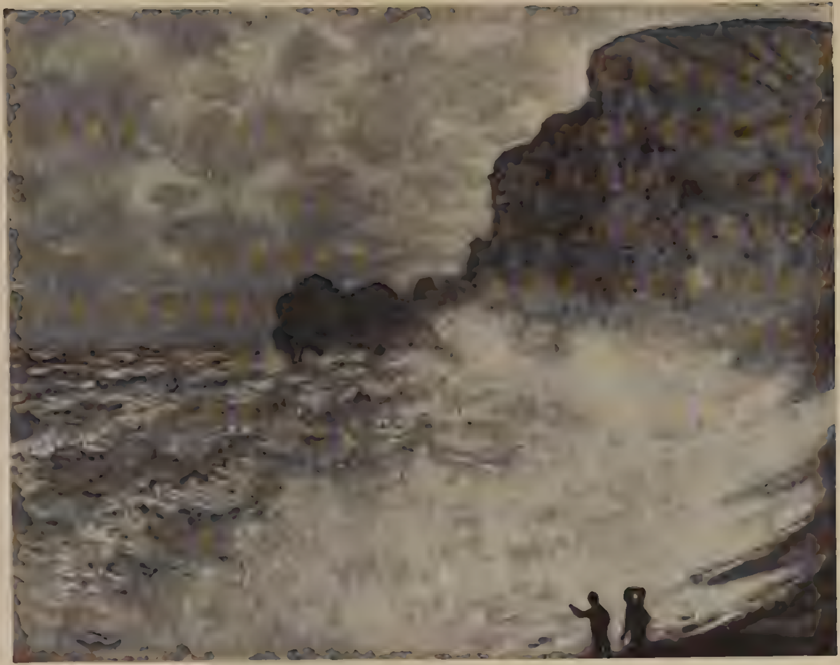
Manet. The Luncheon on the Lawn, detail (*Louvre*).
(Le dejeuner sur l'herbe.)

in keeping with the light and the weather. Later on, when he sees all this less distinctly, he selects some high place from which to paint the great cities, the façades behind the leaves, where a thousand lively and subtle tones quiver in the diffused silver, the golden vapor on the river, and the distant swarming on street and sidewalk. Renoir delights in decomposing the grayest atmosphere and the most neutral light into opalescent prisms, in which the carmines, the strong reds, the pinks, the blues, and the violets of the jeweler, and the gems reduced to powder play, with the sun, over nude flesh, in order to pursue its contours into the transparent shadows, and to rediscover, little by little, and with increasingly startled emotion, its profound volumes. Sisley tells the tale of fêtes on the water, of flaky skies where the storm is collecting, of the vast shudder of the air and of the rivers around masts from which pennants fly, of suburban regattas, of the light wind blowing through the leaves and the grasses on the bank, and of the tremble of the particles in space, uniform and gray. Claude Monet is intoxicated by the light and at a distance of two centuries replies, through his lyricism under the excitement of free expanses, to the lyricism of Claude Lorrain inclosed in the rigorous architecture of the will and of reason.

He perceives the sun before all the others, even when it has not yet risen, and even when the sky is covered. Piercing the clouds, or from beyond the curve of the earth, the sun floods the universe with a powdery rain of rays which his eye alone sees. The sheet of light spread by the sun over the world is for him like an innumerable crowd, through which there wander, along intricately crossing paths, a hundred thousand colored atoms, which other men see in a block. He distinguishes the winter sun from the summer sun, and the sun of springtime from the sun of autumn. The sun at dawn and the sun at twilight are not the same sun as that which shone during the ten or fifteen hours elapsed between its rising and its setting. From minute to minute, he follows its appearance, its waxing and waning, its sudden eclipses, and its abrupt returns to the immense surface of the life whose character and pitch and accent are changed by each season, each month, each week, and by the wind, and the rain, and the dust, and the snow, and the ice. Here are a hundred images of the same water, a hundred images of the same trees, and they are like the laugh, and the smile, and the suffering, and the hope, and the disquietude, and the terror, on the same human face, according to whether full daylight or broad

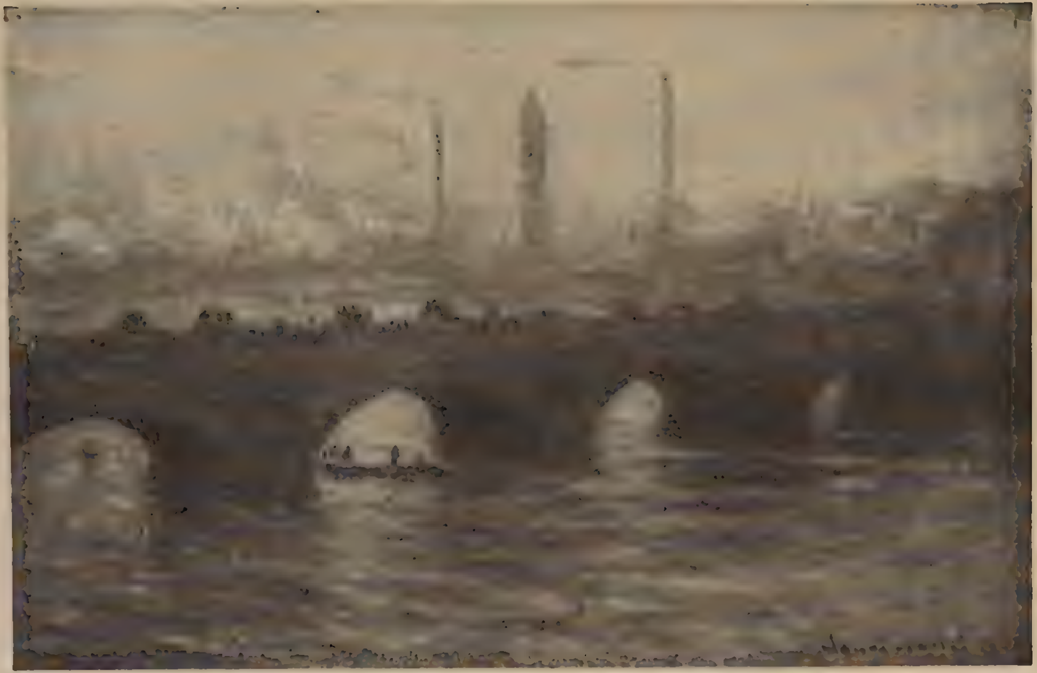


PISSARRO. Rouen, damp weather (*Private collection*).



CLAUDE MONET. The Wave (*Private collection*).

shadow reigns, according to all the gradations which separate broad shadow from full daylight. The form is still there, certainly, but it flees and steals away like that of those faces so mobile that the expression of their eyes and of their lips seems to float before them. In the work of this man, so much alive, what part does theory play? None. It adapts itself closely to the need of the moment and, in order to justify the form of art which, with Pissarro, for example, it presumes to govern, it utilizes the scientific systems in vogue at that moment. But what matter? The thing before us is water, sky, and an immense and changing light, in which there appear vaguely palaces, bridges, trees, cliffs, and towers, which tremble in the sea and in the river in a universal exchange, subtle, and dancing with reflections all tinted by other reflections, by moving and transparent shadows, and by sudden, unexpected bits of darkness and of light. Here are stretches of sea, here are sails, here are clouds floating between sky and water. Here are gloomy depths and illumined foam, and here are phantoms of flowers under the surface of the ponds. Here is the shadow of flowers mingling, in lively brooks, with the undulation of water plants. Here is everything that passes and trembles, that no one before him could arrest, and that continues to pass and to tremble when he arrests it. Here is the fog. Here are rime and frost. Here is the trailing smoke from trains and from boats. Here is the odor of burnt grasses, of flowering grasses, and of damp grasses. Here is the sudden cold vibration with which the wind freezes the colors of the world. When he paints the stones of the façades, the play of the sun and of the shadow and of the mist and of the seasons causes them to move like the surface of the trees, like the clouds of the air, and like the face of the water. He is the painter of the waters, the



Claude Monet. London (*Private collection*).

painter of the air, the painter of the reflections of the air and the water, of the water in the air, and of everything that floats, oscillates, hovers, hesitates, and comes and goes between the air and the water. A shadow passes, and deep in it one sees only the palpitation of a vague gleam, a distant spire, or the crest of a small wave; the light reappears, and everything comes back with it for a second, only to dissociate itself immediately and be bathed in the sun. Here Venice is his subject, here London, here some river of France, some canal of Holland, here the sea in Normandy, and everywhere the limitless empire of the air, of the light, of the dusk, and of the water.

Certainly, Claude Monet saw the Japanese prints, which Ingres had sought already, and whose influence, manifest in Manet, in Guys, in Whistler, in Degas, in Redon, and in Lautrec, increases from year to year in Europe, from about the middle of the century until toward its end. Like them, it tends to express the play of feature on the face of the earth, and the reflections of space in its eyes, which are the river and the sea. But whereas Hiroshige or Hokusai collects into a single image a hundred thousand impressions, scattered over his days from one end to the other, Claude Monet, in the impression of a second, gives a hundred thousand possible images of the season and of the hour when that second occurred. And the Oriental convention and the Occidental analysis arrive at the same result.

For the first and only time, doubtless, in the history of painting, the name given to this movement[1] is well applied, at least, if one limits it to the works of Claude Monet and of Sisley, to the larger part of Pissarro's works, and to the first efforts of Cézanne and Renoir. It is the flashing visual sensation of the Instant, which a long and patient analysis of the quality of light and of the elements of color, in their infinite and changing complexity, permitted three or four men to seize. It neglects the form of things; it loses from sight, in its search for the exchanges of the universe, the line which limits them and the tone which defines them. It no longer sees anything but the luminous and colorful vibration of the husk of nature. But when it subsides and is transformed, it has cleansed the eye of the painters, enriched their senses by an enormous treasure of direct sensations which no one, previously, had known to be so subtle, so complex, and so living; had endowed their technique with a firm and new instrument; and, by its very refusal to compromise, had worked for the future liberation of the imagination which, until then, had been the prisoner of a plastic idealism and of a literary constraint whose fruits had all been gathered in the four or five hundred years before.

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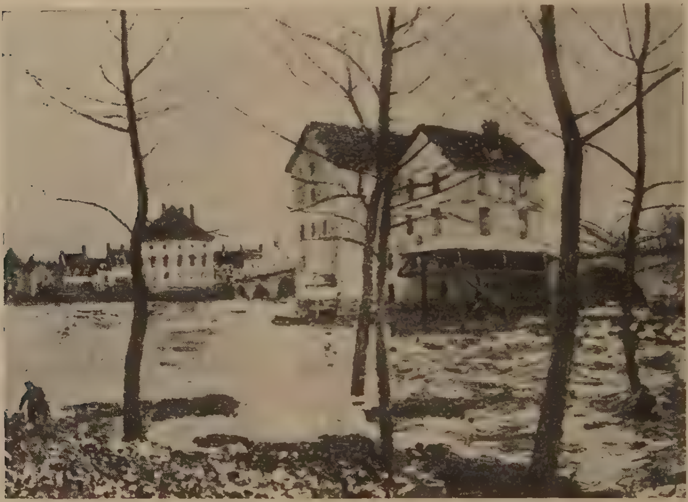
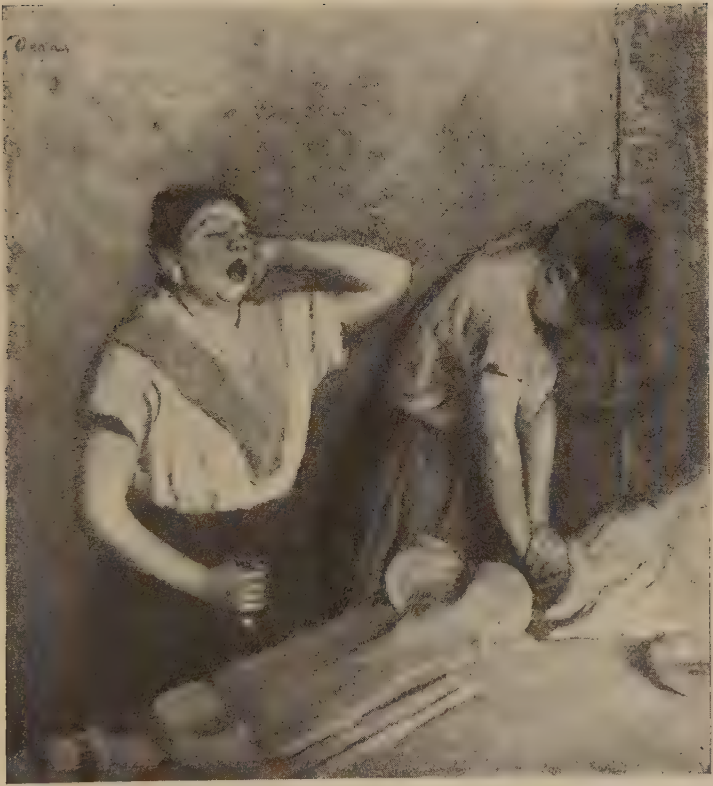
[1] In 1874, the public itself, in its indignation, spontaneously created the word Impressionism, from the title of one of Claude Monet's studies, "An Impression."

IX

This is an immense thing. And for that reason, all eyes have been fixed upon it for thirty years. While the Impressionists, in the face of the blindest and most commercial resistance, were pursuing their conquest of the light, the movements preceding their own, or parallelling it, were ending, or continuing, or outlining beside them, or within themselves, without anyone's perceiving that fact. This was the irresistible consequence of the social dissociation which was advancing with the same pace that they were. Between the solid construction of the artists who came forth from the Revolution and from its expression in romanticism, and the infinite fragmentation of the researches which were now being attempted, there was the same distance which separates the moral ideal of the triumph of the middle class from the new-born needs which it had itself delivered. At a time when Corot, Daumier, Millet, Courbet, and Puvis de Chavannes were still alive, it seemed as if they had been dead for years. Everything that was new, everything that was unexpected or personal, was called Impressionism, to express people's hate for it, or love for it. Lépine, so classical in his delicate and clear-cut notations of the general aspects of nature, and who was indeed influenced by the group, was confused with it. Even after the final evolution of Cézanne and Renoir, people remained obstinate in classing them with Impressionism. Its visions of the sun and its analyses of the light were confused with the obscure symphonies and the analyses of darkness of Whistler, the American, an adroit



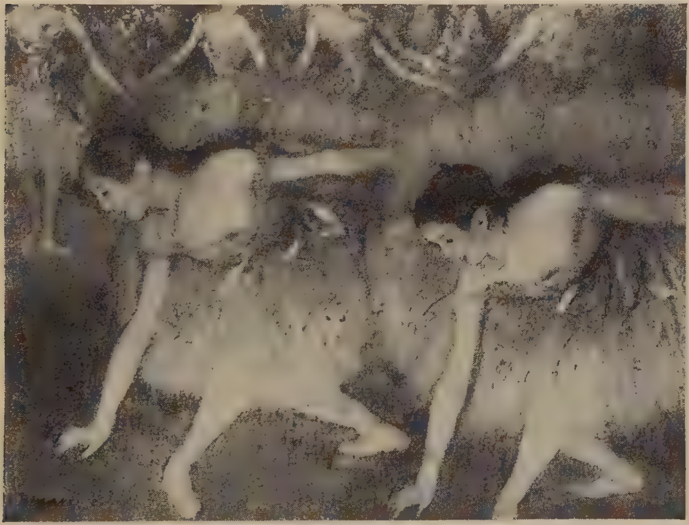
Sisley. The mills, winter (*Private collection*).



DEGAS. Women ironing (*Private collection*).

and subtle amateur, enamored of mystery and of gleams in the shadows, but deriving, as Impressionism did, from Delacroix, from Courbet, from Manet, and from the landscapists of Japan. At its edges, and announcing it in advance by a few years, were the brief and confused jets of flame of Monticelli, which few saw moving in the penumbra. Under its banner were ranged Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec who, the former especially, had practically nothing in common with it.

However, these confusions explain themselves. The naturalism of the last schools of the century, of which Courbet is the apparent initiator, of which the scientific movement is the positive pretext, but of which one can discover the manifold origins and the secret course in all the social dreams and all the plastic realizations which, since the Revolution, stirred the sources of sentiment and of action, presents itself, in its ensemble, as a violent struggle to acquire the elements of reality. But under the husk of the theories and the systems, under the undulating surface of adventures and of manners and customs, that which persists is the temperament of man, the mode in which, as he traverses the life of his epoch, he takes possession of the spirit which circulates through the forms of the universe and fixes itself in them. Naturalism, to be sure, will know no more than the object, will submit to its domination more and more closely for thirty years, and will forbid itself to transpose, to imagine, to compose, to invent, and to ask myth and history for their subjects; it will no longer be willing to do more than open the window, copy the street and the people who cross it, the sky, the trees, the markets, the assemblies, and that which comes to pass, and that which passes. But we shall see one man seizing, in this concrete world, upon matter itself and the density, the savor, and the evident external nature of the object. Another man will seize its color, the reflections which it welcomes and sends back, and the combinations of shadow and sunlight on its shaded surface. Still another seizes its form, the line which describes it and isolates it, its character, and its accent. And in the strong naturalistic unity which will deliver painting from the ball and chain of recipes and dogmas, and



Degas. Ballet girls (*Private collection*).

from the iron collar of the abstract ideal, this one will follow the indications of Ingres, that one of Delacroix, the other of Daumier or of Corot, and this other of Courbet, and all of them the ardent movement toward living color and form which characterizes painting since David.

This is what gives to the later movements of naturalism that appearance of being dissociated from one another, an appearance of analysis in its directions and its researches, and of lyricism in its sentiment, as always occurs, when men take possession of something of the unknown. From Delacroix to Seurat, Signac, and H. E. Cross, by way of the Impressionists, there is no interruption. But while joy seems to mount and broaden in the measure that the conquest of the sun approaches, with the vibration of the landscapes of the south carried to its apogee of violence, brilliance, and of light in its teeming movement, dissociation becomes more pronounced and, from one analysis to another, ends in the blind alley of a pictorial technique whence it cannot escape.[1] There is no deviation of direction and of influence from Ingres to Toulouse-Lautrec and, through Manet and Degas, to Seurat, the powerful, musical, and grave initiator of pointillism, the poet of the silent forms which wander in the quiver of the air and at the edge of sunny waters; and with his successors also there is no deviation. But the passionate and sensual realism of Ingres, and Manet's realism with its preoccupation with color and with plastics, tends, with Degas, toward documentation, grazes the anecdote with Toulouse-Lautrec, and turns, with their successors, to illustration, to a record of daily events, and even to caricature.

At least, it is in that direction that the study of the form in movement, and of gesture, in the street, the studio, the café, the theater, the race course, and the dance hall, has attained the sharpest rendering of immediate truth and of concrete character. There is no voluptuousness, none of the intoxication of arriving, beyond the form and the object, at wandering space, the infinite domain of the communion, like that of music, in which intuition causes all lines, all volumes, the whole succession of the planes, all relationships, and all the echoes of harmony to converge. Instead, there is, with Degas, dried-up will-power, and a line that cuts like a knife. Whether his subject is a laundress with bare shoulders and arms, pressing down on her iron with both hands, or a group of dancing girls in the theater, in training to loosen their joints, or long race horses coming across the green to return to their stable, the gesture is so exact, although the muscle is not visible, that it seems to be followed and dissected by a steel point running with the current that throws it into relief. In the diffused light, everything appears livid, everything takes on the deadly aspect of the accessories of glass and of metal which modern life imposes on those who seek to forget it in the pleasures of the machine. The faces seem lit by the wan reflections from café tables, from spoons, saucers, and the absinthe on the counter. The angular and flabby bodies squatting in the pale metal of the tub with its splashing water, render hygiene as sad as a hidden vice. He shows us meager forms with protrusive bones, a poor aspect, harsh and distorted, of the animal machine when it is seen from too near by, without love, with the single pitiless desire to describe it in its precise action, unrestrained by any sense of shame, and without the quality of heroism which might have been given to the all too clear eyes by a lyrical impulse. There is loftiness of bearing in the vision without innocence which has rid itself of all desire to please, and which is eager to know in order to describe, and to describe in order to know. There is a constant sacrifice to the expression of the gesture, which is tenaciously followed in the most precise acts of the toilet, in the movement of climbing out of a bathtub, of raising the arms to twist or comb the hair, and of pressing the towel or the sponge on the breasts. As soon as his sharp eyes surprise the thinness of elbows, the disjointed appearance of shoulders, the broken appearance of thighs, and the flattening of hips, he tells of all this without pity. And yet it is strange that this Occidental, enamored of the most disinterested truth, should often make us think of some Oriental painter seeking to drown the disenchantment of his spirit in the richest and rarest tones, broken at every moment, glistening, dying, and being reborn. It is a cruel art, rendered more cruel by the flames and shadows carried across the flesh by the fires of the footlights, which bring out the hollows and the projections, but in which, at times, when the pastel catches fire and flares up, there shines a poetic flash, evoking, with the ballet girls swept along by the whirlwind of the dance, with their glittering gauze and

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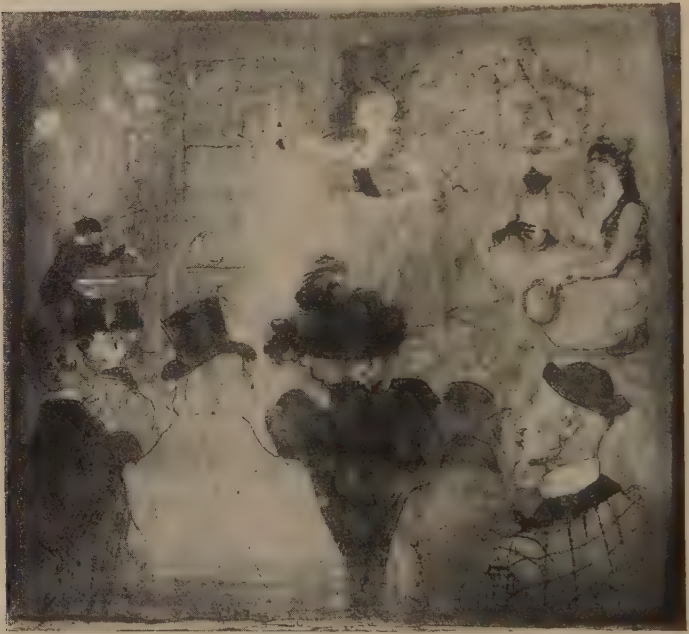
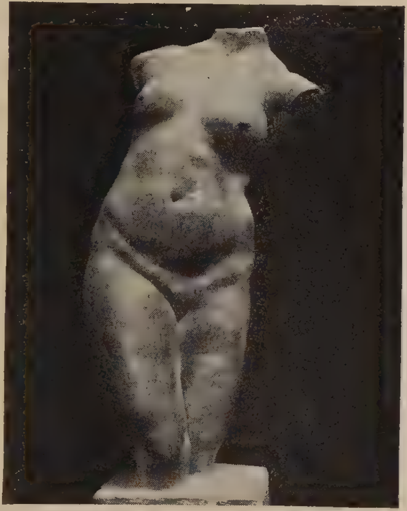
[1] See Appendix, (*a*), p. 497.



Toulouse-Lautrec. The Moorish dance (*Private collection*).

make-up, some too brief dream in which the soul of some Watteau touched with acid, returning to wander under the artificial lights, might see phosphorescent butterflies flying up to them and breaking their wings.

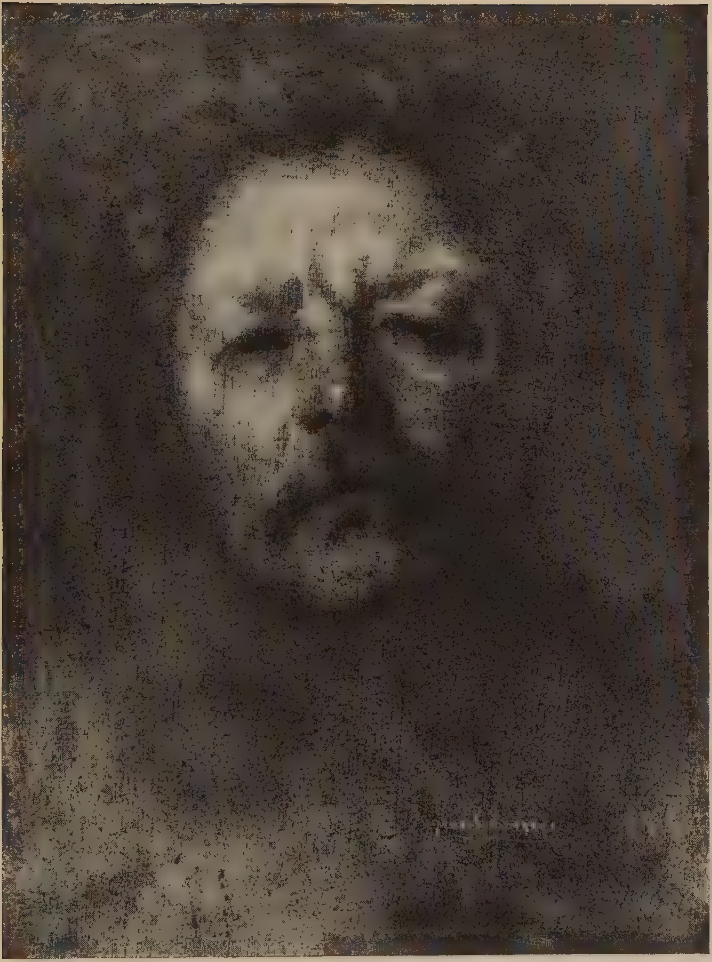
With Toulouse-Lautrec, this dry flash is as if extinguished. The cruelty persists, turns to sadism, draws blood from the tarnished mouths, drags down the eyelids, oils the poor, flat hair, and renders more thin and wan the miserable flesh which is bought and sold in the market. Blanched drinkers, pale females, the dead glow of zinc bars, the sad, weary round of the café concerts and the dance halls, the moldiness beneath them, and the odors of pharmacies and pomades—everything that a strong century drags behind its conquering army in the shape of worn-out creatures of love, existing to console the wounded and the sick for having to live—all is violently evoked by Toulouse-Lautrec, with the leap of his line, the acid of his color, and the disjointed rhythm of his composition. It is the sinister face of pleasure, a last instinctive protest of agonizing Christianity against the rising intoxication of a universe accepted.



Dalou. Woman's torso, study.

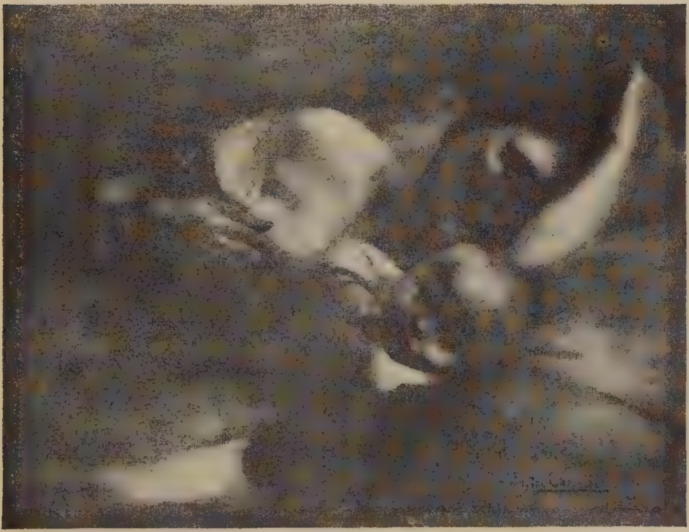
X

And so it is finally to this acrid, over-sharpened work that the analysis comes. Romanticist pessimism, with its lyrical power, proud of its suffering, exalts voluptuousness. But since it depends too much upon its bitter conclusions, it leads straight to those images, after which there will be no more hope, save in a new Illusion. Here is Renoir, here is Cézanne, who are preparing an unknown world. One would think, though they are but little younger than the hard Manet and the cruel Degas, and but little older than the sinister Lautrec,—one would think that they belong, Renoir especially, to a new century. The world accepted in its indifferent strength, its sensual joy regained—all that which is contemporary with these clear-cut and somber works of art—will not mature in the mind until twenty or thirty years later. Fatigued by a hundred years of one of the most powerful efforts in history, the French soul of their period, penetrated by the tragic disenchantment of Schopenhauer, by the sensual Christianity of Wagner, and by the immense despairing murmur of the Russian novel, feels that what is nearest to it are the final and sudden awakenings of romanticist suffering, whose bitterness increases upon contact with the clear-eyed realism developing beside it and offering it new food. Even when it knows and reasons, perhaps then above all, the heart loves the Illusion. While the writers and painters of the document are pursuing their investigation, in solitude and without pity, the romanticism of Carrière and of Rodin absorbs into the sound of its lyric flight the voice of the truth which they know, and makes a heroic passage between consciousness, into which their time is sinking and carrying on its insistent effort, and the intoxication of the future which they feel to be growing up in them.



EUGÈNE CARRIÈRE. Portrait of the artist (*Private collection*).

At their beginnings, Carrière and Rodin are exact realists, the one rather hesitating, a little too moral and soft, the other penetrated by the double current of the sober practice of the stonecutter, and of an academic education which he is not sufficiently prepared to fathom or to reject. And here are the first collective portraits of the family and of childhood, and we see in them the traces left by Whistler's technique, doubtless, that of Courbet probably, certainly that of the good painter Fantin-Latour, and especially that of Renoir, whose mothers and nude children with the uncertain outlines of their soft flesh have been seen by Carrière; and here is the young "Age of Bronze," erect upon the threshold of the new time, like an antique image barely touched by its enervated disquietude. Then, with the sculptor's rising spirit and broadening knowledge, there grows up a lyrical movement which will burst the earlier form, so that new rhythms may be liberated. With the painter we find once more the sentimental thought which Millet started on its course and which, after having been rendered firm in the sculptural mind of Daumier, will finally result, after traversing the social idealism of the century, in the forms, sometimes epic, but almost always theatrical and hollow, of the Belgian sculptor Constantin Meunier. But with Carrière it takes on a didactic and metaphysical accent which will cause it to be accepted too quickly by the *littérateurs*, and too quickly forgotten by the painters. He knows, through Daumier and through Rodin, the power of the expressive volumes on which all the light falls; he has discovered the spirit which circulates from form to form, which draws them to a center, presses them outward, and beats against them as against a metal. Thereupon he follows that spirit alone; form is no longer more than a symbolic sign which he has not sufficiently studied and into which his desire is to precipitate the torrent of universal life rolling from his soul to his heart, and with this torrent, his love, which binds and cements the whole. In his vague arabesque, in the sinuous and continuing curves which make of his intertwined groups something like a single block of life, in which milk and blood, the carnal intoxication of the mothers, and the gluttonous avidity of the infants flow without interruption, to make round the breasts which are offered, to sculpture the skulls which press against them, and to unite the arms which seek each other, the great idea of transformism appears for the first time in painting, as something voluntary and conscious. It is too voluntary and too conscious, for it sees no more than itself, and tries to expose and impose itself; and it is only in the weakest manner that it kneads its clay around it, the



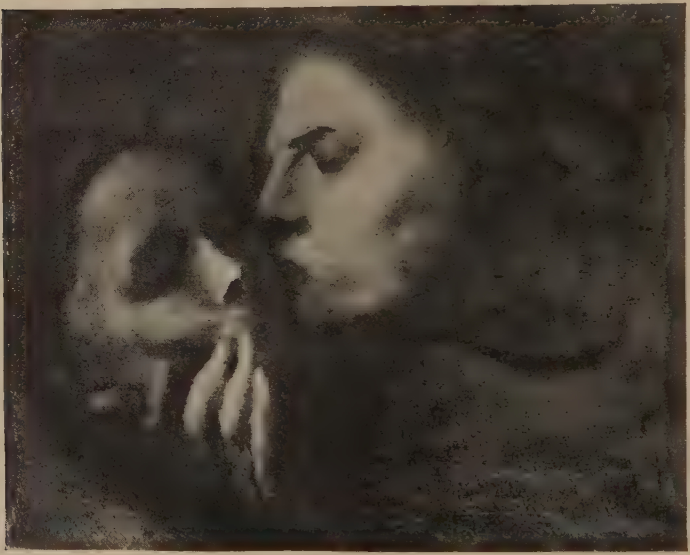
Eugène Carrière. Sleep (*Private collection*).

material being but barely animated by reds and grays. in which the shadows are sometimes hollow, in which the projections are sometimes awkward, and the embraces are often swollen, as if wrought in some unknown matter from which the skeleton and the muscles were absent. Moreover, one divines in this whole art an irresistible need to subordinate to moral sentiment the plastic intoxication which, with the heroes of painting, subjugates, dominates, and sweeps along in its wake the highest moral sentiment. But a great idea broods over this work, and one sees it fumbling in the irregular movements of the new-born babes, rising with the growth of the children, lighting up as their astonished eyes open upon the world, and bursting forth with nobility in the images that he has given of the faces of certain men, and of himself. The thought is powerful, the work is uncertain, standing very high in sentiment, but disintegrated by irreconcilable forces and showing only the few distant summits which emerge from the mist accumulated in the backgrounds.

With Rodin, the last of the great romanticists, one who seems to assemble in himself, multiplied, the lyric power of the loftiest natures of romanticism and the structural impotence of the poorest men who were inspired by it, the preoccupation with expressing the spirit which circulates in all the elements of a group, diminishes, on the contrary, from work to work, in the measure that he accentuates the strength of the living detail, of the volume determined by the summit of the movement, and of the play of the lights and shadows on the vibrant surface over which rolls the wave of muscle. Often—too often, alas!—the gestures become contorted, the unhappy idea of going beyond plastics and of running after symbols creates groups in which the embracing figures are disjointed; the volumes fly out of their orbit, the attitudes are impossible, and, in the whole literary disorder, the energy of the workman melts like wax in the fire. Even in his best days, he lives and works by brief paroxysms, whose burning sensation runs through him in flashes. There is Impressionism in him. He is not slow in binding the center of his vision through sinuous lines and continuous passages with everything round about which prepares or propagates that vision. It is there, alone, tragic, like a cry in the silence. In order to express it, he does not even have to add a head or arms to a torso, or, under a face and a neck, to establish the torso which carries them. A quivering belly, a moving breast, or an agitated head, full of projections and hollows, imperiously alive and marked by the beat of the blood, the fluid of the nerves, and by thought, suffices him to create a work which makes everything around it seem neutral and dull. With an indication of movement, a spot of aquarelle on a drawing, or a colored vibration overlapping the lines or permitting them to overlap like a spatter of flame, twisting, sinking down, or launching forth, he renders the quiver of everything that is most furtive and most like the lightning in the very spirit of the form through which his mysterious life penetrates us incessantly.

The expression. Everything is sacrificed to that undefinable thing. Never did Rodin quite understand the French sculptors of the Middle Ages, whom he for a long time claimed to follow, and who, in their dominant preoccupation with saying what they felt, gave proof of so much balance and measure; and when, later, he turned to the philosophic sculpture of Greece, he did not, again, completely understand its meaning, and how it is prolonged beyond the passing moment, and what it is that causes its echoes to resound beyond the space in which it lives. And that is not necessary, and his desire to seek in the past for corroboration is perhaps that which is smallest and least pure in his nature, that which has too often led him to tricks of plastics which would swamp his work if a sensual and spiritual force did not almost always uplift it.

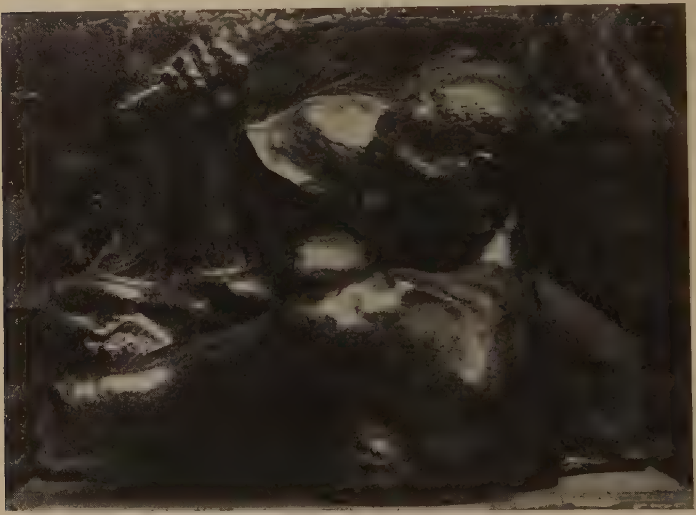
In reality, like all the romanticists, this sculptor is a painter above all, and, more than any other among the romanticists, unsuited to erecting a monumental ensemble wherein the architecture of the world should appear summarized. All the palpitations and all the inner leaping of the life of expression produce a sonorous undulation which the light on the surface of the form gathers up, in order to set it vibrating, like a string under the fingers. The dance sends into the life of expression the quiver of its muscle; the sobs of music convulse its depths. Since Rembrandt, no one had so



Eugène Carrière. The kiss (*Private collection*).

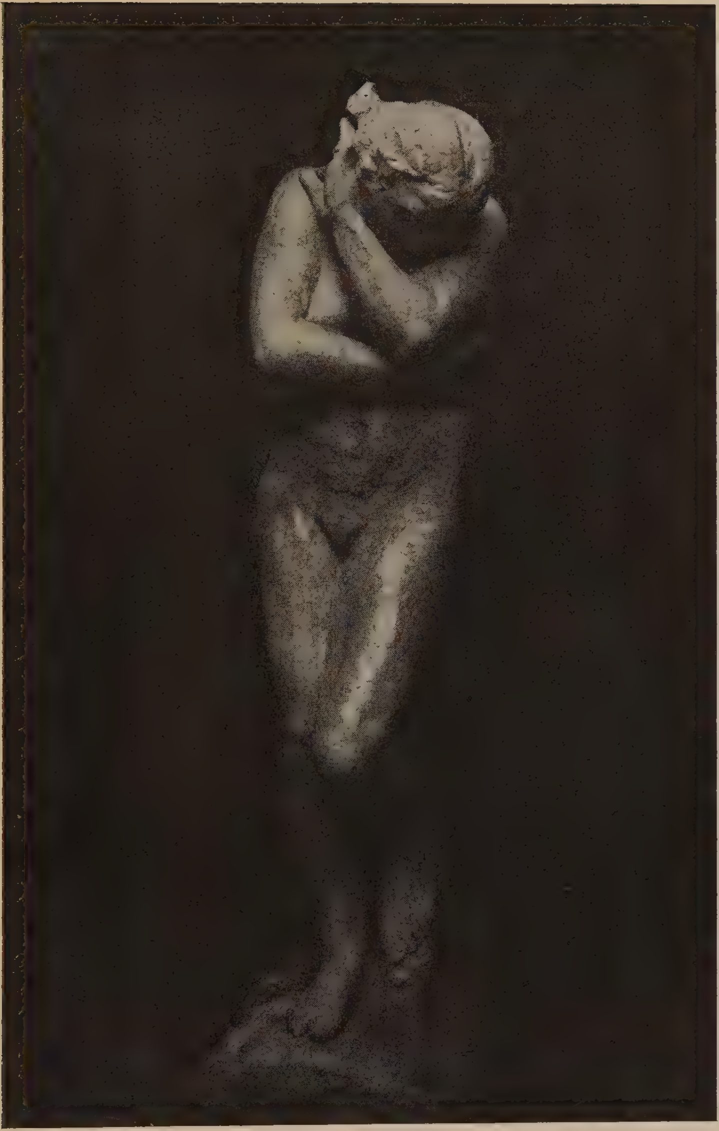
powerfully brought up, from within the living masses, the living spirit which stretches, or breaks, or relaxes the muscles, swells the breasts, and causes them to move, rolls and furrows bellies, marks out the bones of the face, and escapes from the open eyes.

It is thus that subterranean force gives to the ravaged face of the soil its irregular modeling. The sculpture of the whole century had labored sufficiently to bring to the point of culmination of the attitudes in action the inner fluid which determines their form. While Pradier, the "Athenian of the rue Bréda," is continuing Falconet, Clodion, and Chinard, by disrobing frail goddesses in his very Parisian apartment, Rude transports movement into stone. The great Barye who, near Rodin, seems as calm as an antique, because he conceives form in the ensemble, as an architect does, builds organically, spreads and distributes movement through the muscles and the skeleton, accumulates it in jaws and paws, and, under the vibrating planes, keeps his wealth of energy at high tension. The movement gathers itself together and bounds, cracks with the crushing bones, wrinkles at the muzzle of the wild beasts, shines at the level of their flat heads with the eyes like burning stones, and lays their ears straight back in anger or in fear. One would say that the artist courts with it all the scattered, hidden, or quivering sources of power in the world, to concentrate them into the active or reposeful mass, beating with palpitations and traversed by waves of force, as the Egyptians concentrate, in their composite monsters, the light and the spirit as they wander. Dalou, at first far too much vaunted, and then, for political reasons, a little too much forgotten, surprises it at times in the fold of a feminine torso, the gentle hollows, the dimples, and the fat curves of the flesh. Carpeaux sees it springing from all the surfaces, causes it to shine forth from teeth, mouths, glances, feet, hands, knees, hair—the whole nude skin calling forth dancing flames from the whirlwind which he whips to frenzy, with the movement of the nervous limbs, the fleshy torsos, and the round breasts, and to the sounds of festive music leading a brilliant, light, and cynical world to the ditch filled with blood. In his work, the movement turns in a circle, vivifying everything, but not knowing where it can come to rest. Rodin comes to this work to gather up its movement from its summits alone; as he animates them, and as he penetrates through them to its very center, to the burning focus whence the movement radiates, he attaches them to it directly, no longer perceiving on the whole husk of life anything but the living impulse which arises from its depth.



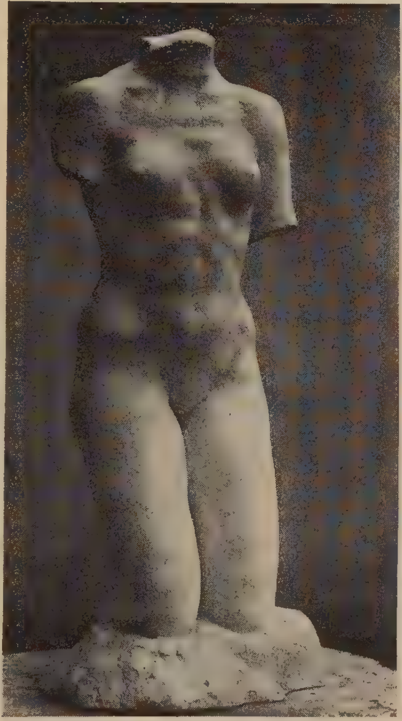
C. Meunier. Bas-relief, bronze.

It is thus that he expresses, with dramatic lyricism,



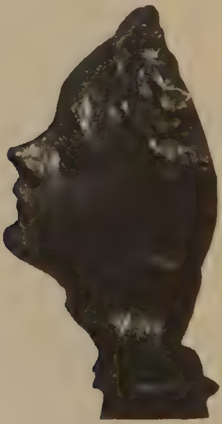
RODIN. Eve, bronze (*Musée Rodin*).

that which is most unseizable in life, and that which is most permanent also. Love haunts him, because it is love which brings about in the forms that seek each other and unite at its call, the strongest expression of forms given over to the tragedy of their fate and sent rolling into indifference toward morality and toward death by a power higher than morality and death. It is in vain for "Eve" to hide her face in her arms; she is victorious; behind her flesh, already sinking and losing its freshness, she drags men, beasts, the plants, the oceans, the stars, and a whole troop of slaves following her scent, as the wave of dead leaves runs in the wake of the wind. Here are pitiful couples united by the cohesion of love. The man tries to flee the outstretched lips, to tear his devoured skin from the other devouring skin, to lift his athletic torso above the breasts which undulate and breathe like the sea. He cannot. He is held there by his soul, whose merging lyricism and revolt boil up at each of those contacts of mad couples who seek, in their fusion, forgetfulness of thought and of the void. When the embrace unlocks, there is clotted blood on the bodies and the limbs, which have been laid open and bruised like those that have been on the rack. The bodies, rolling with every flux and reflux of the spasm, are like the damned of Dante, at once drawn together and repelled by the burning within them. It is impossible for the spirit to tear itself from the flesh and from the soil, because there is, in the flesh and the soil, a spirit more universal than itself; it is only a fragment of that universal spirit, turning in space around its motionless force and seeking to escape it. The "Hand of God," in which sleeps the embryonic form, need only close in order to crush the intelligent larva which palpitates as it assumes its rudimentary form in the primeval clay. The "Thinker," in his harsh tensity, over the gate by which one enters hell, is animated by the same spark which, around him, convulses birth, youth, love, the death struggle, and death itself. The will, being less powerful than hunger, "Ugolino" crawls, like a filthy beast, on his hands and knees. The portraits cling to the earth, which rises in them from everywhere, with the soul and its majesty. The "Balzac" is like those menhirs which the elementary forces seem to erect on our roads. The "Claude Lorrain" has worn-out boots, a clumsy bearing, and awkward gestures, but its face is dazzled by the light. And if the "Apollo," whose every step causes sunlight to burst forth, has vanquished the hydra, his two arms remain fixed to the stone of a pedestal.

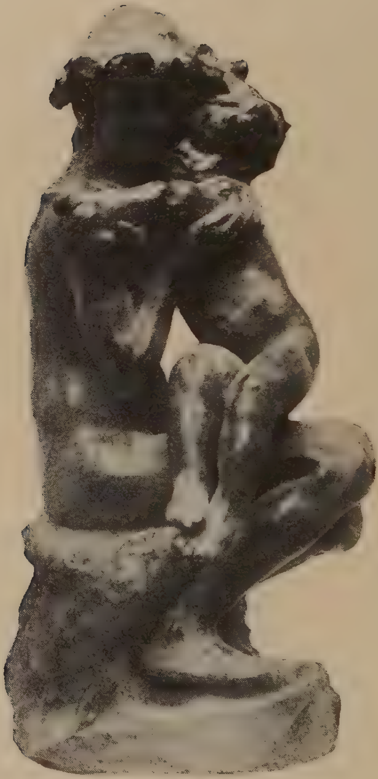


Rodin. Woman's torso, plaster.

One would say that Rodin rose from the soil and from the flesh in order to reach the tragic spot to which Michael Angelo descended from the summits of the intelligence, and in order to utter the cry of the earth as he meets him who brought us the cry of heaven. Whether their starting point be the senses or the mind, materialistic pessimism and Christian pessimism meet halfway, in order that, through orgy or through knowledge, they may teach despair. Incredible obstinacy of the greatest natures in accepting neither their senses nor their soul. Sublime also since, apparently, this conflict is necessary, every thousand or two thousand years, for the gaining of a higher equilibrium between senses and souls, and of resignation to the intoxication of living, whose intensity is multiplied by their agreement.



Rodin



Rodin

Aix-en-Provence

Chapter VIII. THE CONTEMPORARY GENESIS[1]

I

IF the work of Cézanne did not interpret with singular power a thoroughly general desire that was willed by our character, it would not have suddenly gained that ascendancy which has gone beyond the borders of France and has brought Europe flowing back to it, in quest of a new intellectual order. While the fugitive impression and the fact without commentary were establishing around him the endless and yet so quickly exhausted motif of literature and of painting, his work suddenly appeared like a refuge, coarsely but solidly built, and glowing with its somber harmony, in which the artist could find the elements of new generalizations, and through which he was constrained to pass. It presented so radical a type of opposition to Impressionism that it was but natural that men should try to condemn, in the name of Cézanne, that movement of purification and of research which was so necessary for us. This is the usual rise and fall of the balance between action and reaction. In reality, the work of the master of Aix continued, completed, and terminated Impressionism, and reassembled, in view of a new construction, the materials which it had selected and contributed.

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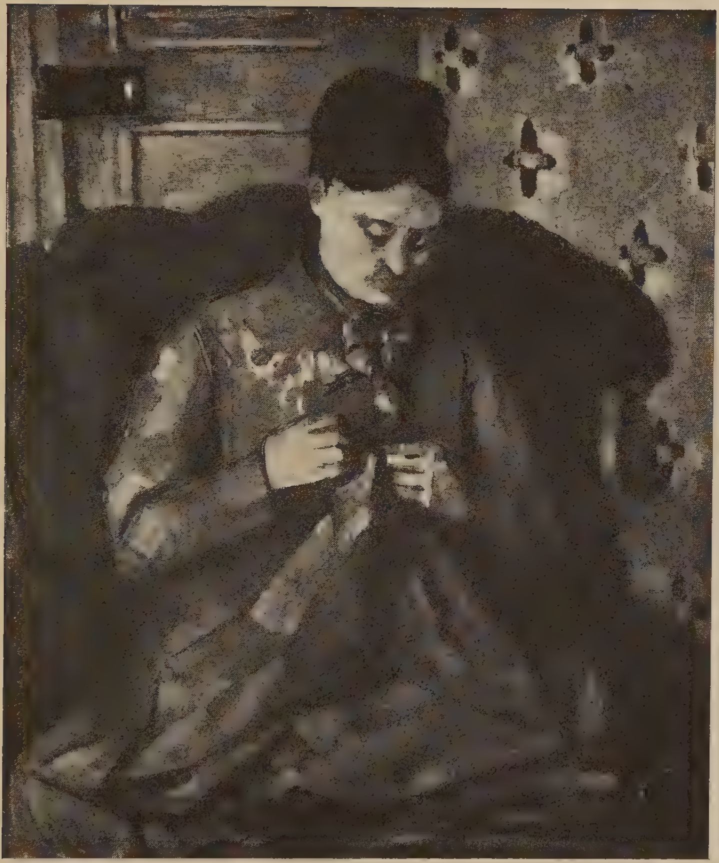
[1] Publisher's Note.—This chapter was revised since the publication of the original French edition of the *History of Art*, and will appear only in the definitive edition in French. We thank M. Elie Faure and M. Georges Crès, his publisher, for having authorized us to reproduce the new version from the manuscript.

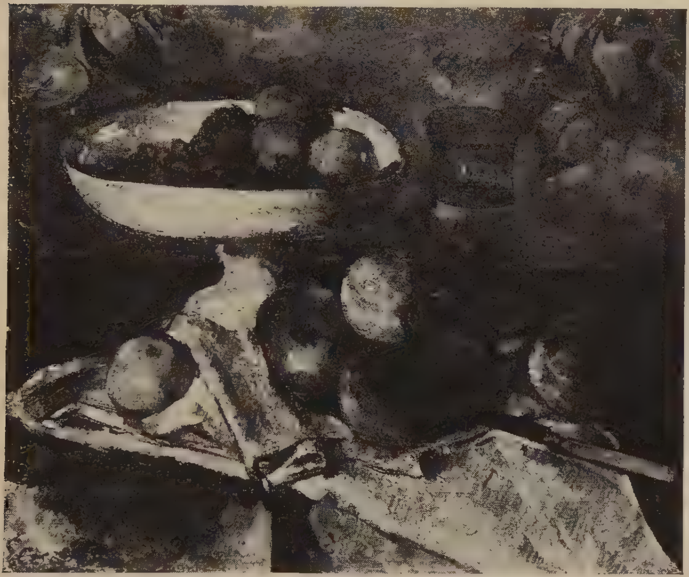
The work of Paul Cézanne was even confused for a long time with that of the masters of Impressionism. He occupied a secondary place in the group, standing a little in the background, between Guillaumin and the charming Berthe Morizot. That was quite natural. He was of their age. He had become their companion during their trying times. He exhibited with them. The public linked him with them in its censure, although he was already in advance of them, and although the Philistines of 1875, who condemned Claude Monet in the name of Delacroix or of Courbet, could not foresee that the Philistines of 1900 would condemn Paul Cézanne in the name of Claude Monet. He had made the acquaintance of the founders of the group about 1862, when he met, at the atelier Suisse, the fiery Pissarro, who initiated him into Courbet's painting. Zola, his companion from childhood, took him to Manet's studio. His tense and fierce sensibility loved the independent nature of his new friends, their passionate ardor, and the power of enthusiasm revealed by their words. He followed them to Auvers-



CÉZANNE. Woman sewing (*Private collection*).

sur-Oise, where they revealed to him the play of reflections on surfaces, where he watched with them the passage of the wind over the water, the eternal undulation of the leaves, and the shadow which the clouds carry over the soil and over the red roofs of the houses, and through the tremble of the flowering apple trees and cherry trees. To them, in spite of his education and habit, he was indebted for the clean eye, the probity of intelligence, and the original and unknown power of his blood. With their aid he shook off the influences which had been tyrannizing over him for fifteen years: Courbet, then Daumier, then Delacroix, then, though less had been seen of his work, Corot; then, working backward over the traces of their souls, Rubens, Veronese, and Michael Angelo. To his friends he was indebted for the laboriously and slowly gained freedom from the despotic seduction of the great works, the freedom to consider the heroes of painting not as guides whom one is in duty bound to follow, but as witnesses whom one has the right to invoke. When he returned to Aix-en-Provence in 1879, he was still far from perceiving in himself the regular and powerful beat of the unknown rhythms which he brought to us later. But he had at least a pure, high-keyed palette, and the moving face of the world impressed upon his sensibility its most fleeting and living images, those freest from literary or sentimental interpretation. That was what he owed to Claude Monet and to Pissarro. And he never forgot it.

It was at Aix itself that he was born, forty years before. It was at Aix that he had lived a studious and wild childhood, that he had learned from Vergil the love of the classic soil and of measure in art; there, with the young Zola, he had spent the days of his vacations, like a little faun drunk with sunlight and cool water, spending nights in the depths of the woods, and the burning hours in the rivers, drying his sunburnt skin in the eternal wind which, through the corridor of the Rhone, whirls the dust of the roads and the pulverized marble of the circuses and the aqueducts. When he returned there, he was alone. No more pagan illusions, no more friends. His art at the time was a weapon which shone, certainly, but which he handles unskillfully. Around him was indifference, slander, folly, prejudice, and a total lack of comprehension of what he was, of what he desired, and of the torturing sensibility which drove him to take refuge in himself, to avoid unknown faces, and to flee the obligatory conversations and visits which make up three quarters of the provincial adventure. This wild, badly dressed man, who lived on his income and who

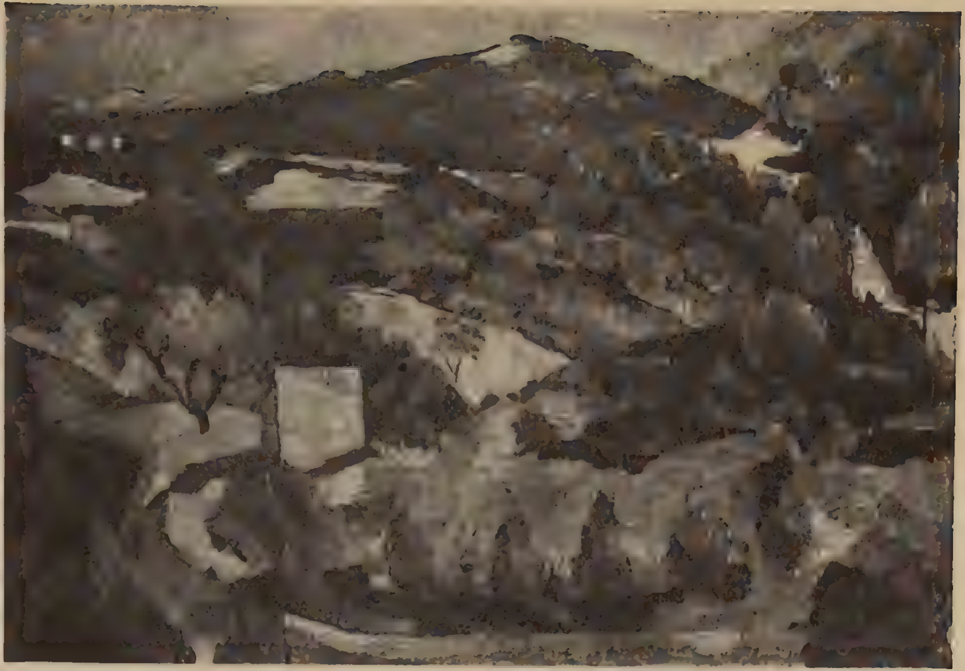


CEZANNE. Still-life (*Private collection*).

painted, was certainly a lunatic. People spoke of him with severity. He was ridiculous, besides, clean, to be sure, but with spots on his coat; and his red nose, his watery eyes, his small twisted beard, and the impression he gave of being hunted set the whole pack of street boys upon him. The poor loved him, for he had an open hand. But no one took him seriously. Certain people exploited him. And moreover, as he did not wish anyone to "get his hooks" into him, he drew back into himself, like life when it is so sensitive that every hostile or rough shock from without wounds to its depths.

He suffered. No one knew that. He held out until the end. He could have lived in Paris, and found friends and admirers, and their encouragement. He did not wish to. He shut himself up in his strength, fixed his inner images, and around him, sought that which confirmed them. Sometimes he returned to Paris, where he passed three quarters of his time in the Louvre of Veronese, of Courbet, and of Rubens. He made two or three short sojourns in Flanders and Holland. He desired to know nothing of Italy, as if he had feared that contact with the great works which attracted him above all others, would corrupt his growing resolve to reach his own ideas. And that is all. When he regained his native soil, the history of his life was ended. That of his mind was opening.

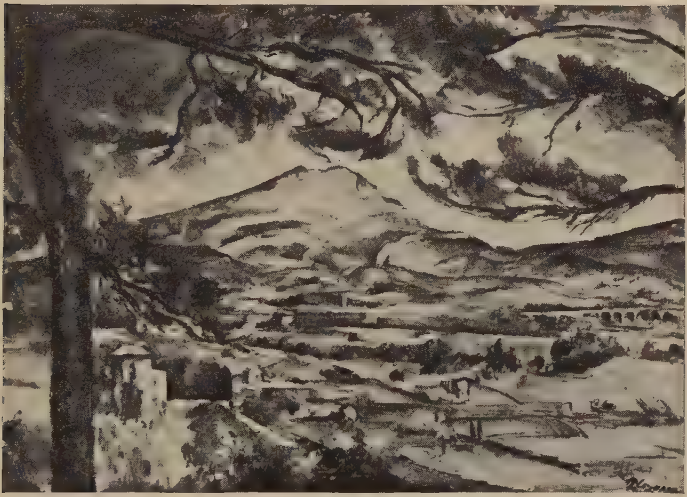
Those landscapes of Provence, bare and rigid, those red lands sown with thin trees and rising toward the rocky hills whose profile against the dark sky is so pure, and that reddening gold which bathes them at twilight without veiling their fixed lines, were very soon to furnish him with the elements of a plastic vision which he would perhaps never have discovered in the heavily watered luxuriance of the valleys of the north. In Provence the houses pile up like stones, the leaves do



Cézanne. Landscape (*Private collection*).

not conceal them, the angles of the roofs and the walls cut from the light geometrical figures which bring the mind naturally to simplifications for which it finds reason in the dry, hard bareness of the rocks which bar the horizon, of the sky which is generally without clouds, and of the trunks stripped of leaves which shoot up straight and clean, cutting through space at regular intervals. From no other place could he have drawn more naturally the desire for a sober form, shorn of ornaments, of puffery, and of incident, a form firmly based upon the soil, heavy, deep rooted, and reduced to those masses alone and those lines alone which define its relationships. Each time that he found himself in the presence of a bare wall, of a road, of a motionless pond surrounded by stone bluffs, or a vast space described by the granite chain of the mountains of the country—something straight, rigorous, and categorical—he held the central motive of the poem of color which floated in his inner vision, and which he was ceaselessly seeking to confront with the nature of the senses, in order to justify it and to build it. The houses, the roads, and the hills of Provence brought to the massive lyricism of the painter the monotonous, but compact, sonorous and full rhythm in which his summary phrase voluntarily inclosed itself in order to express the ordered conception which he had of the world. It was as if great verses were unrolling with force, laden with mind, hard with condensed matter, and moving with a powerful swing to strike the rhyme, as if to cause the image to penetrate more profoundly by keeping it at the summits of memory and sensation alone.

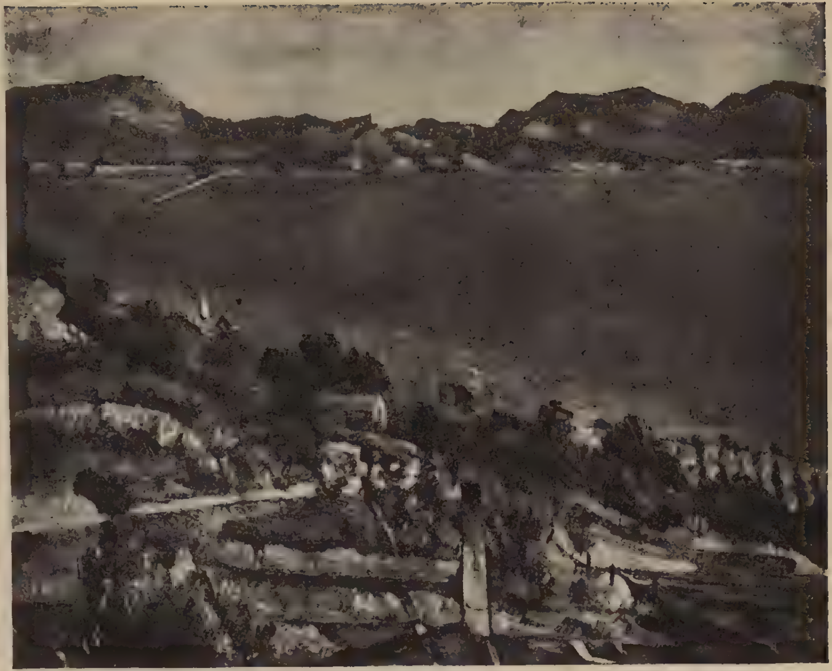
The unfinished appearance of Cézanne's canvases gives to those who have not a rounded understanding of his thought, the impression of an incomplete nature, limiting itself to taking notes of the world, which are essential, doubtless, but summary, and instinctively seized on the wing. Each one, in reality, represents enormous work, and a spiritualization, progressively and laboriously obtained, of exactly those sensuous elements which constitute the origin of all his painting. He was wont to say that all the forms in nature may be reduced to the cone, to the cylinder, and to the sphere, and this saying has had its victims. At bottom, it was only a symbolic manner of expressing the final appearance which the forms *tended* to assume in an abstract universe, whose imaginary limits he took good care not to overstep, when he had the palette in his left hand and the brush in his right. His imagination, quite unsuited to extend itself over surface, however weakly, developed its power when he treated the question of depth. Never has there been an artist less capable than he of inventing and combining figures,



CÉZANNE. Sainte-Victoire (*Private collection*).

of finding in the myth, the event of daily life, or the personal dream, a pretext for exalting and transforming the images. The Spaniards themselves, Velasquez, Zurbarán and Greco—not to speak of Goya, a satanic poet of lust and of death—and perhaps the Hollanders, knew less badly than he how to transport the immediate, outer world into an imaginary world. He seemed to copy what he saw, he tried to recover that innocence of the first ages of life during which curiosity awakens —it is that innocence which, with the man who knows much, having thought much and suffered much, borrows the language of the most self-conscious will in order to assume the majesty and the power of the law, stripped of all commentary. His candor was a victory. His impotence to imagine assumed singular appearances, which would awaken doubt of his power of creation if the plastic quality of his work, comparable with that of the greatest, were not there to reassure us. In illustrated books, in the History of Charles Blanc, in the *Magasin pittoresque*, and even in fashion journals, he hunted up external silhouettes which he enlarged and colored like a child, incapable of inventing a gesture or an attitude which should combine harmoniously with the attitudes and the gestures round about. He did not invent, he could not invent. It was only "from the motif" that he knew how to abstract and to simplify—to the ultimate limit of abstraction and simplification, remaining uniquely, and despite everything, a painter and nothing but a painter, perhaps, in truth, the most intense, and the most completely bound up with the matter of which things are made, that ever existed.

The universe, in fact, is for him only a pretext for holding, within an architecture reduced to its soberest, but also solidest, expression, a matter magnificent and dense, in which the rocks which pierce the crust of the



CÉZANNE. L'Estaque (*Luxembourg*).

earth seem to have been pulverized in order to harden, unite, and condense the red soil, the dark foliage, the thick azure, and the lusterless seas of the Mediterranean countries. He took as his pretext the great denuded landscapes, the figures encountered at random on the road, among the people around him, and at the inns of the country—peasants, children, card players around a rough table, women in old-fashioned house dresses, or else those round, heavy fruits which he would throw down on the table amid the unwashed glasses and the half-filled wine bottles. Whatever he painted, he knew well that in starting out from the sumptuous materials with their dark splendor which he drew from one aspect of life as well as another, and in never losing sight of the great, summary lines between which he perceived them, he would gradually succeed in giving to his form the most powerful volume, and in making it turn in space like those geometrical figures which expressed in spiritualized language the directions of his glance. "When color attains its richness," he used to say, "form attains its plenitude."[1] The one met the other halfway, sought it out, and defined it little by little, in the measure that it gained in opulence, in somber light, and in heavy maturity. The tone appeared to him like an actual secretion of the form, which itself appeared to him like a gradation of the tone. . . . I imagine that in the depths of the silent hearts of the old sculptors of the Middle Empire of Egypt, those who erected the statues, dense, and defined by receding planes, and who saturated the compact grain of their granite with indigo, red ochre, and with emerald, there must have trembled something of the brief fervor followed by the restlessness of despair which beat in Cézanne's heart when, after weeks of exhausting effort, he had been able to wrest from mystery one of those somber harmonies, as much a thing of architecture as a temple, which have revealed painting to those worthy of loving it.

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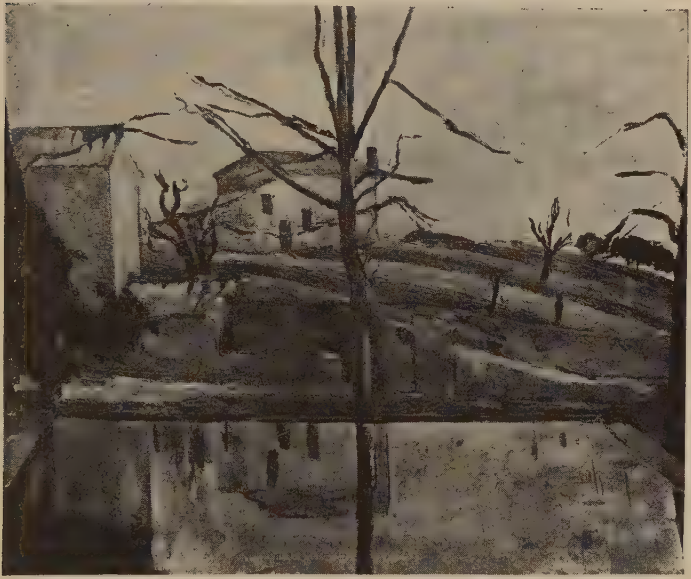
[1] Cited by Emile Bernard.

In nature, there is for him no other "subject" than the plane. It is but of little importance that the object be exactly followed in all its contours and finished in all its details. That which is necessary is, that it be in its place in the depth of space as regards the other objects, that, at the same time, the gradations of its edges give it its own existence, and that the object, in relation to the world, and the world in relation to the object, possess complete solidarity. He leaves to those who will come after him the care of polishing the phrase, of rounding the period, and of animating the recital. He put the straight or curved surfaces in their



CÉZANNE. Landscape (*Private collection*).

place, like a mason, whose hands are rough, but whose mind is made up of the sense of balance he has acquired, of the calm of his will, and of subtlety. His landscapes have the appearance of a section of the planet seen from a far distance, stripped of its local life, and reduced simply to the essential masses which define its construction. His personages are placed like living statues, frequently awkward and ill squared, but forcefully defined by sustained planes and by profiles whose clearness is uninterrupted by any useless accidental. His still-lifes have the splendor of the heaps of fruit which concentrate into themselves the whole of surrounding life, and which seem to send forth their full and spherical form and their color in its saturation, from the innermost center of their matter. The most immediate and the most material sensation, which is always present with him, is ever carried by the mind of the painter to its maximum of severity, of purity, and of comprehension.

"I remain," wrote Cézanne at the decline of his career, "I remain the primitive of the road which I have discovered."[1] "The archaic," he might have said. There is in the work of this master an impersonal and general character very different from the spirit of minutiæ manifested by the primitives, and this quality of Cézanne's gives to his work a sense whose importance he himself never suspected. As primitivism announces the advent in history of the individual, archaism is at the beginning of the great collective rhythms. . . . Whenever one of his pictures of former years was presented to Cézanne, he did not wish to see it and, in his own mind, judged very severely those who liked such things. He forgot his canvases as soon as they had left him. They lay about everywhere, under cupboards and behind furniture; they were used to wipe

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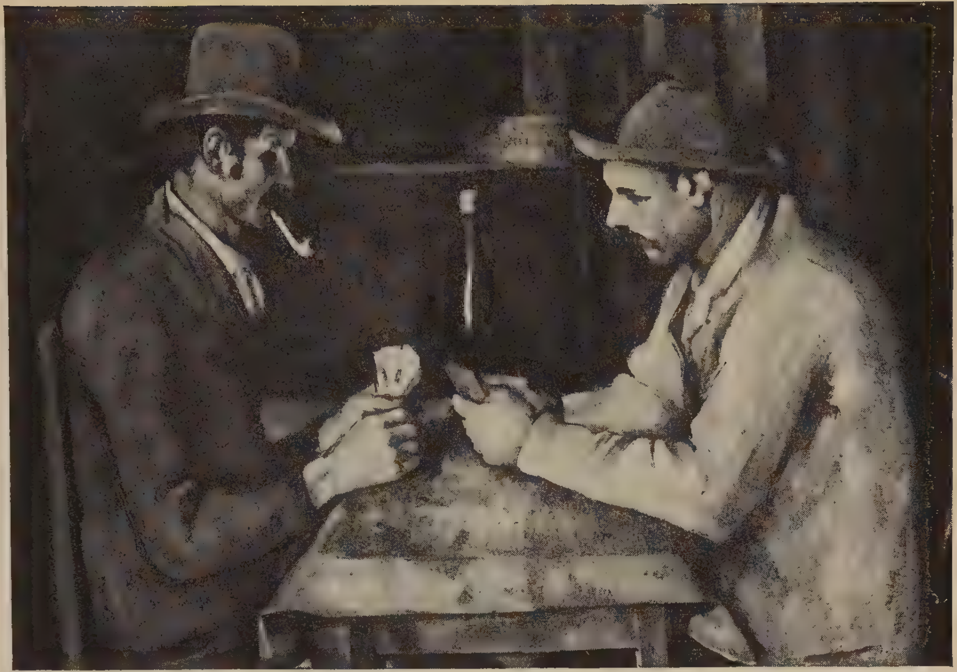
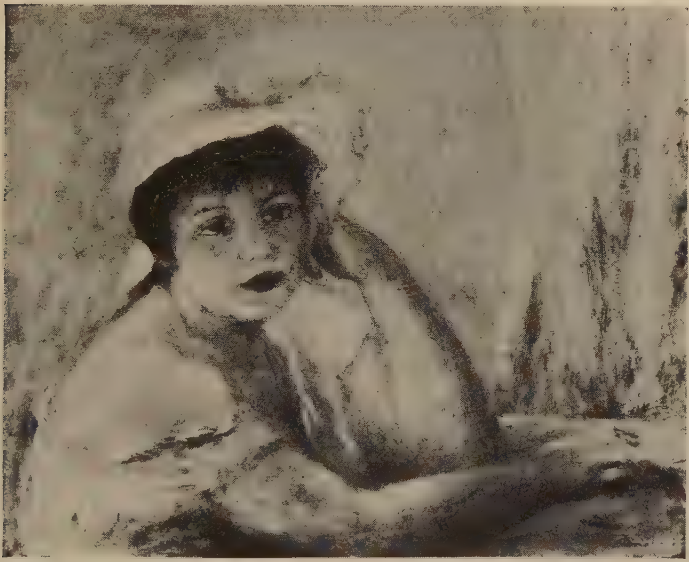
[1] Emile Benard.



Cézanne. Card-players (*Private collection*).

the stove and the floor. A childhood game of his son's was cutting out the windows and the doors in them. He sometimes abandoned them in the open fields. He rarely signed them. Like all the great anonymous men, he expressed a kind of social need, going beyond the individual in order to erect one of those grand essays of rudimentary architecture which announce in society a unanimous movement of concentration in depth. He went regularly to church. A sincere Catholic, fleeing the priest and the bigot, he was evidently seeking in the past the shelter of one of those imposing social structures which he did not find in the present and did not suspect in the future. There is nothing less sentimental and less moral than his work. There is no anecdote; no thought of pleasing or of interesting. It is a pure metaphysical monument, and the materials with which it is built and which make it perceptible to the senses are the most thoroughly tested and chosen, but also the most summarily cut, in the world. Even when he tries to compose, as in those extraordinary gatherings of nude personages where, visibly haunted by the memory of Poussin, he makes an awkward attempt, amid the great choir of the trees, of the vast sky, and the running waters, to build up a broad sensual melody, even then he is absolutely free of any kind of psychological or literary intention. And even then, his classicism, that need for order and for measure which had been pursuing him since childhood, is unaware of its own significance. He, the provincial, the Catholic, is in accord with the secret rhythm of his century; he is urged on toward the unknown organism hesitating on the threshold, by profound forces of which he is no more conscious than were the masons of the last Romanesque churches whose nave was suddenly to leap, lighten, elongate, and hover like a wing, with the generation which was arising. A lofty and lucid intelligence, as long as there is question of building with the incomparable material which the generosity of his nature permitted him to discover and to isolate in the world, he is, even so, surpassed by the grandeur of his influence. And it is for that reason that this influence cannot be exhausted save by the realization of the organism awaited.

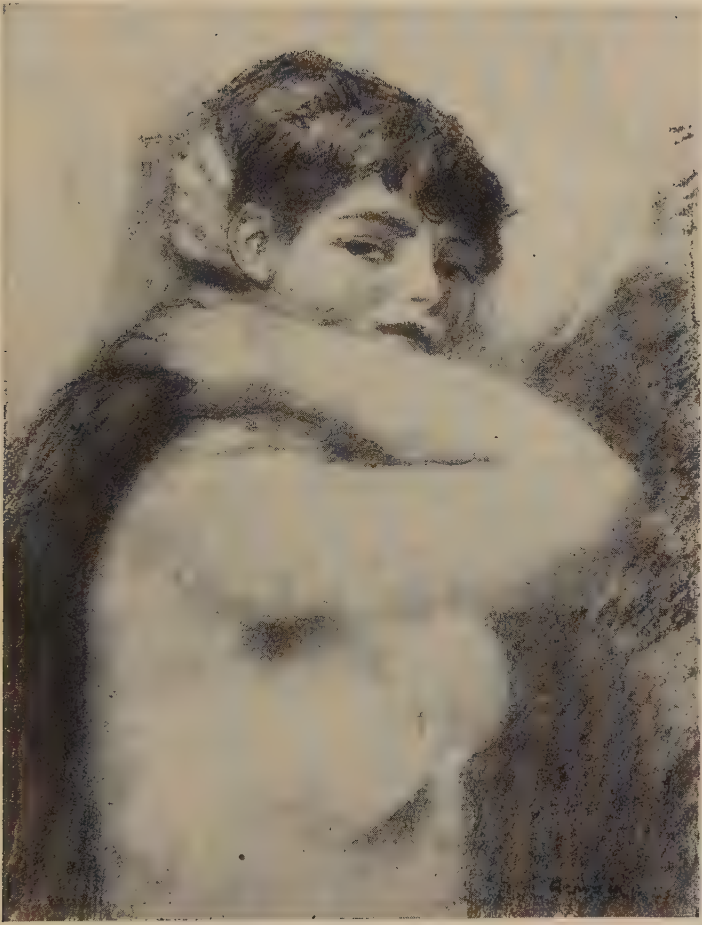


RENOIR. Woman at a table (*Private collection*).

The end of this great man is well known. He took sick one day when he was working in the country to arrest upon a canvas the inexhaustible movement which was revealing to him, by its perpetuity and its constancy, certain concordant directions and certain eternal aspects. He expired two days afterward, and no one, outside of a few dozen artists, knew of it. And this was well. He had always disdained homage and despised those who abase themselves in order to surprise it or to force it. He had desired that solitary life which, to the end, he protected, against the assaults of fools, by outbursts of noble and savage modesty, for which no one understood the necessity and the reason. The shadow which hovers around us from the time when we are forty years old, did not, even if it grazed his heart, turn him away from a mission whose importance he felt, and neither did his tardy and restricted, but so lofty, renown turn him away from it. He knew himself to be the greatest painter in Europe. When one has that power within one, one may go forward alone.

II

Indeed, one is in oneself a multitude. One is the center of a whirlwind of scattered forces, ignorant of one another, and the testimony to which must be sought in social phenomena. When the artist wishes to compose, it is certain that his desire responds to those general desires which were formerly called religious or metaphysical, and of which, most of the time, he is ignorant himself, because they do not interest him. Composition, the subordination of all the parts of a work of art to some idea of rhythm and order, is not an external thing, dependent on an individual caprice or a passing fashion for its rejection or adoption. The mystic sentiment of a work to be undertaken in common goes beyond the individual. And painting, the most individual, and the most intellectual of the arts, either remains uncertain on all its frontiers, or else concentrates itself in some anonymous and summary form in which the archaic outline of an unknown architecture appears. The love of an ancient order, classical or religious, is only the most puerile manifestation



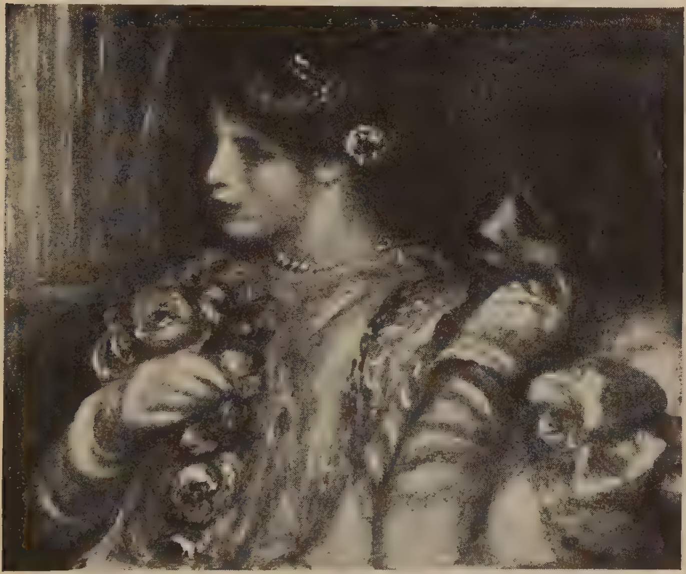
Renoir. Woman dressing her hair, pastel (*Private collection*).

of this universal need. It is the rôle and the destiny of the most innocent of men—he who labors or he who thinks—to gratify this need.

Thus, while Courbet's and Manet's materialism of form was, through the Impressionists and the Neo-Impressionists, approaching the end of its investigation, while the moral current born of its pitiless decisions was introducing acid and vitriol into painting, through Degas, through Toulouse-Lautrec, and through the ferocious Forain, at the heart of the movement itself, an unknown force was organizing itself and attempting, through Cézanne, to give architecture to the universe, outside of all sentimentalism, and, through Renoir, to recreate a sentiment indifferent to moral purposes, by seeking, in the play of the reflections and of the lines revealed by matter itself, a harmony without object.

For let us make no mistake. There are no works more distant from each other in aspect, or nearer in essence and in direction, than the one created by that man of the will, bringing nature to obey the systems he built up in order to react against the disorder of the time, and that of the man of instinct, finding in nature, without apparent effort, forms which wed each other, and colors which penetrate each other, in order to react against the despair of the time. Anarchy is pessimistic, and what is more, sad. Those who have traversed its hell find no repose save in the power to create order and health for themselves, or else in death.

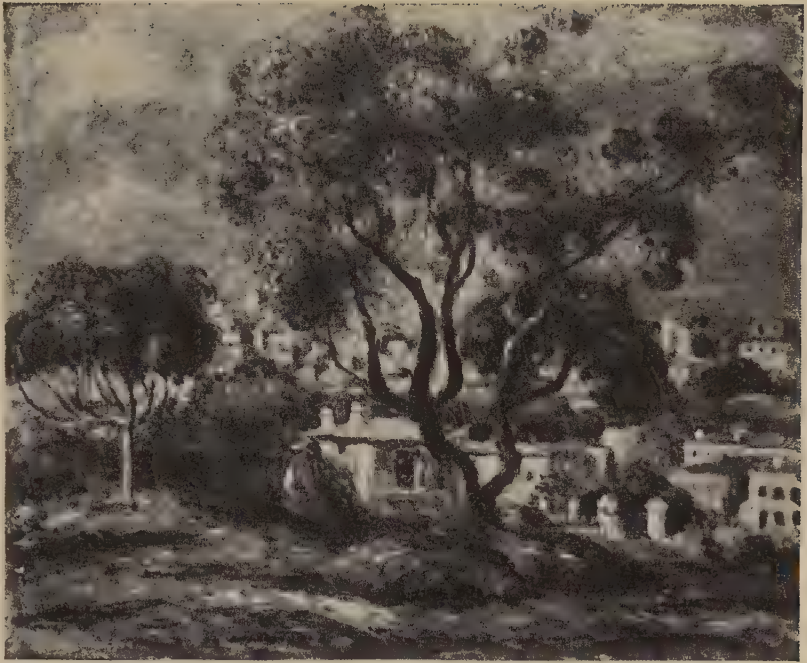
The powerful man, in order to recover joy, has no need to flee the cities, and to go, with Gauguin, to live among the primitives of to-day—as the pre-Raphaelites, victims of the same sickness, lived among the primitives of former times—and to build up, in distant islands, the burning landscapes whose tense and confused sensuality does not dissimulate either their slightness or their softness, and which halt at the façade of the Cézannian edifices. He does not permit himself to be vanquished before his hour, in the manner of van Gogh, the Hollander, a great heart burned by the flaming earth he paints, by his electric waters, by his trees and grasses crackling like tongues of fire, his roads, his houses, his harvests, his figures, and all the faces of man, convulsed, warped, and battered as if they were expressing some conflagration, subterranean or of sentiment, with this painting of precious stones and of yellow gold, these drawings whose swarming life overpowers one, this rain of gnawing acids in which the soul and the senses are corroded, and this desire for wild joy, of an apostate ascetic. The powerful man is not mad. And he is simple. He hums a



Renoir. The Opera-box (*Private collection*).

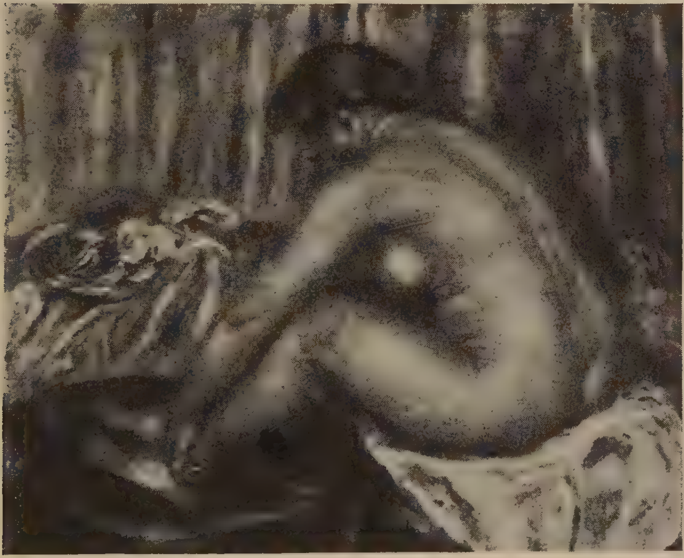
tune while he paints, and is bored when he is not painting. It is certain that he suffers, in his heart, like anyone in misfortune; and his bones are twisted with pain. But he never complains. He says he is only too happy to have kept the sight of his eyes, those miraculous eyes, mirrors of the world, gray and gentle and sad, sometimes sparkling with the mischief of the young painter, in his withered face, bent, lengthened by his white beard, and so noble—recalling that of Titian when he was almost a hundred years old. "It is he," he says, "who looks like me. He has stolen my tricks from me." He does suffer, as a matter of fact. But in his nature dwells the mysterious joy which he recovers instantly at the depths of his wasted organs and his twisted joints, the moment that he seizes his brush; and it is immense, pure, full of movement, undulating, and renewing itself from the depths, like the source of a great river, overflowing with sinuous forms and with waves of changing tones, which penetrate one another, obedient to the fecund rhythms of a sensualism grown more rich, more moving, and more complex in the measure that sickness and age dry him up and weaken him a little more. How long ago it is—the time when, a little astonished, a little respectful, and a little inclined to jest, he listened to the passionate demonstrations of Pissarro, and, standing beside Claude Monet on the banks of the Seine or of the Marne, watched the mottling of the water and the mottling of the leaves under the wind, the round spots of the sun on flesh and on the earth, and the vibration of the air in the silence of the summer! In those days he had muscular hands, which caressed the surface of the world. Now with his feeble hands he twists the world in depth.

The history of Renoir—born at Limoges, the country of masons, potters, and enamelers—is even of less im-



RENOIR. Landscape (*Private collection*).

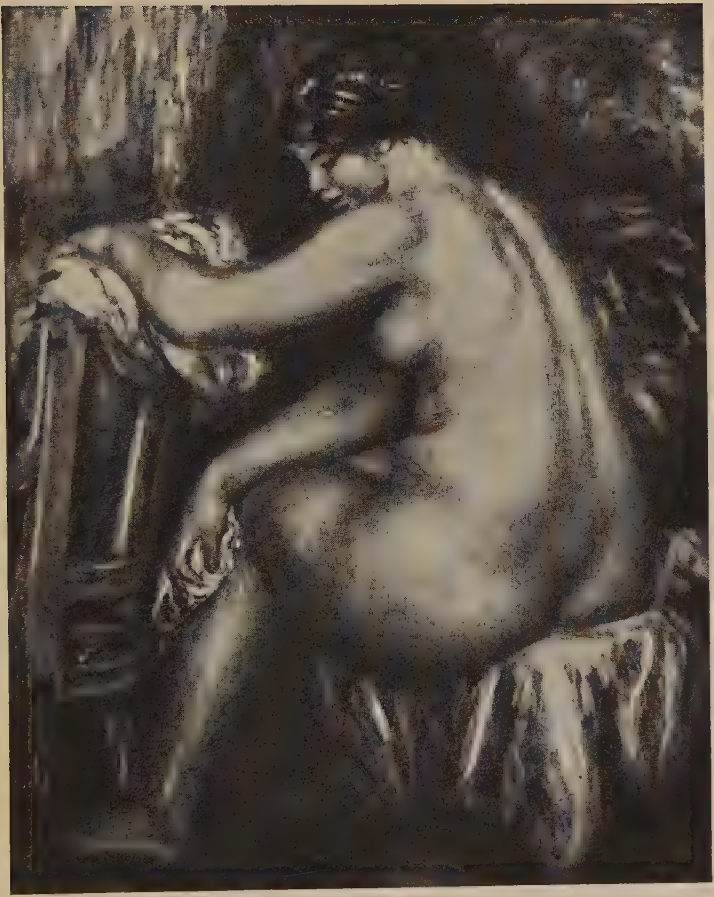
portance than that of Cézanne, for he does not seem to have struggled to discover his innocence. He had perhaps nothing factitious, or almost nothing, to eliminate. He did not continually prune off, like Cézanne, but rather added constantly. He belonged, like Cézanne, to the Impressionist group and shared its unpopularity; later on its success. He continued, like Cézanne, to receive the collective hatred or admiration vowed to those who composed it, by a public enamored of classifications as definitive as they were unprecise. For the public he must, again like Cézanne, still belong to the group, although both of them departed from it to such a point that one and the other may pass as the prophets of the movement in the opposite direction which has followed it. It was, indeed, by watching the reflections on the bark of the poplars and the oaks, on the rippling banks of clouds, on the skin of his nude women, and on the full-blown petals of the anemones and the roses, by pursuing them in the flight of the planes, and the sinking of the luminous shadows, that he turned around the forms with those reflections and those shadows, and bound up the mass of the universe with the lyrical movement of his mind. He necessarily underwent the evolving influence of the greatest among the greatest painters, Masaccio, Titian, Tintoretto, Velasquez, Rembrandt, Watteau, and Delacroix; and, starting out from Claude Monet, he rejoins Rubens by crossing the world of the flesh with its movement and its sensations, and he will subject it to his increasing strength, and constrain it to burst forth again from him with the regularity, the simplicity, and the constancy of the harvests issuing from the soil. Whereas Claude Monet started out from the immediate form realized by Courbet and Manet, while he pursued the moving tremors made by the light on the changing husk of the form and rendered them more and more subtle, Renoir, taking as his point of departure that husk itself, followed the opposite path, and swept with him the tremors of the air and of the waters, the tremors of the blood in the blue veins, and the tremors of the flowers under the sun and the dew, and carried them into the very substance of the air, of the water, of the blood, and of the flowers. And whereas Impressionism refused more and more to recompose the world in the mind and to transpose it into painting, Renoir, whose imagination, by the way, was almost as rudimentary as that of his friends, recomposed it and transposed it in his very instinct, seeing life, harmony, and coherent, solid, and continuous form born where, for other men, there is only appearance, discord, the hollow surface, and chaos.



Renoir. Woman at her toilette (*Private collection*).

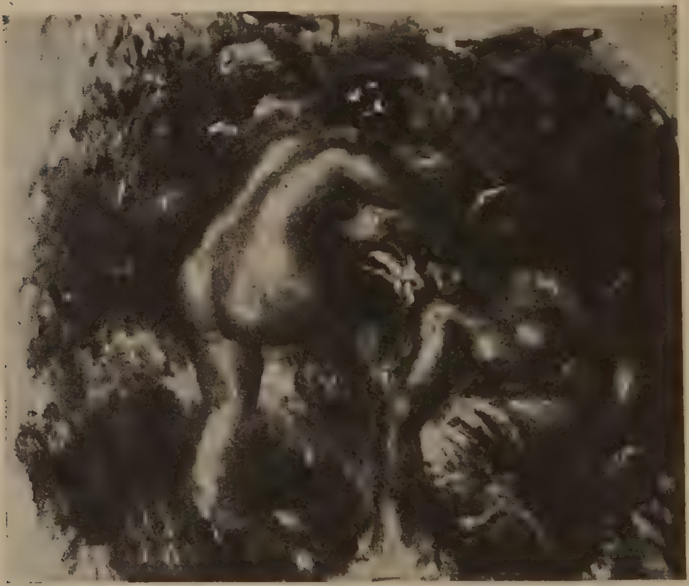
Imagine a whole room hung with pictures by Renoir. It seems to stream with red, from the fruits, the blood, and the flowers pressed against the walls. From a little nearer, there is an Oriental confusion, like a miraculous carpet; several studies are on the same bit of canvas—a nude woman, a little girl with a pink or red hat, a bouquet of roses, of poppies, of pinks, of geraniums, or of sage, and a landscape the size of one's hand with the circle of the sea and of space. But from this red mass emerges something like those currents of sap which rise from the center of fruits to color their skin, and infinite ashen grays in which silver and mother-of-pearl tremble, in which the emerald, the turquoise, the pearl, and the black diamond penetrate the opal, where the slightest colored palpitation of the slightest touch of paint resounds gently through the ones farthest from it by subtle waves impossible to follow with the eye. And nearer still one sees the beach and the ocean, the trees twisting their flame, the rivers rolling into the reflection of the sky, the ribbons, the hats, the dresses, and the unbound hair of the women—all the dews of the earth mingled with all the prisms of the air, converted into trunks and branches bursting with sap, flesh swelling with blood, young breasts, round arms, firm bellies, glistening hips, and heavy translucent waters filled with the scintillation of the ruby.

It is a lyric transposition, ingenuous and spontaneous, into a form which seems born and reborn incessantly from an inexhaustible focus of the senses, a transposition of everything in the world that has radiance and splendor, the downy pulp of peaches, the cherries, the pomegranates, the rind of lemons and of oranges, the roses of amber color, the blood-colored roses, and the fields of crimson clover, of cornflowers, and of buttercups, and the mouths, and the laughs, and the glances, and the fire of glowing stones in the



Renoir. The toilette (*Private collection*).

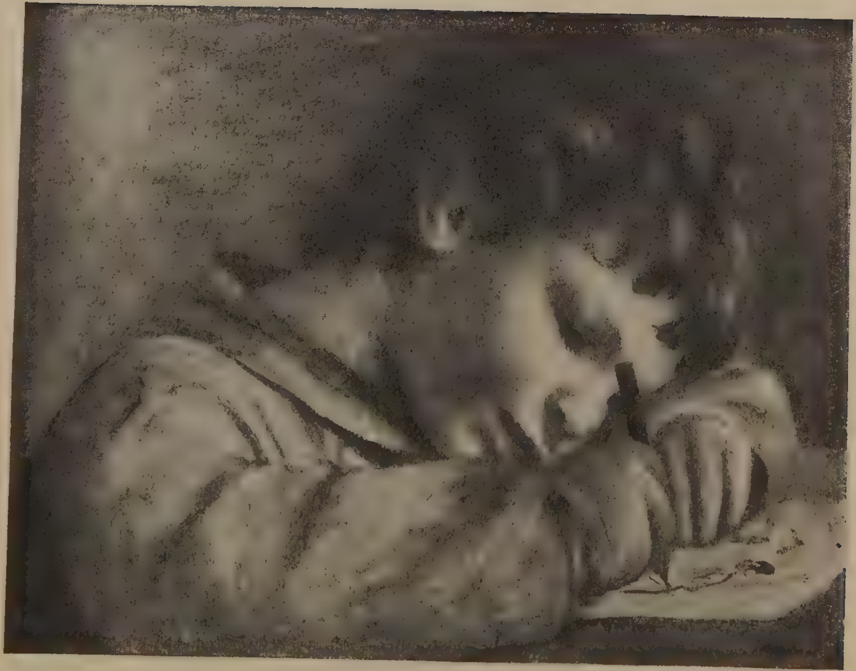
ripples of the brooks, and the sun setting over the clouds, and its iridescence around the leaves. There really is in that spring, with its tremble of silver, a little of the blood of those bare breasts, a little of the blood of those pinks, and there is some of the silver of that spring in those pinks and in those bare breasts whose red reflections it passes on to the air while taking from it some of its fire. Those massive forms turning in transparent space define painting itself, and the least of them expresses the glory of life and the power of summer.



RENOIR. Women bathing (*Private collection*).

When a painter has this ability, everything encountered by his eye is instantly transfigured. A hand on some gauze, a necklace around a neck, or a rose set in the hair causes us to think vaguely of a butterfly wing on the pollen of some giant flower, of a fruit laid on some blond marble, or of some unknown gem gleaming in the darkness. Everything is tremor, everything is a caress; the silks are like flesh and retain their lightness, the flesh is like silk and retains its weight. An arm emerging from satin and resting on velvet borrows from the satin and the velvet their pearl and their purple, and in exchange transmits to them its warmth; faces in the glowing penumbra of an opera box continue the penumbra and illuminate it, the life of the flowers and of the lights circulates in festival halls to mingle with glances, to wander over bare bosoms, and to quiver upon bodices, ornaments, and ribbons. Before the earlier Renoir, one thinks of Velasquez as he might be after the passing of three centuries, when his soul, joined by a hundred tributaries, had borrowed more of maturity and also more of freshness from the light mists of France.

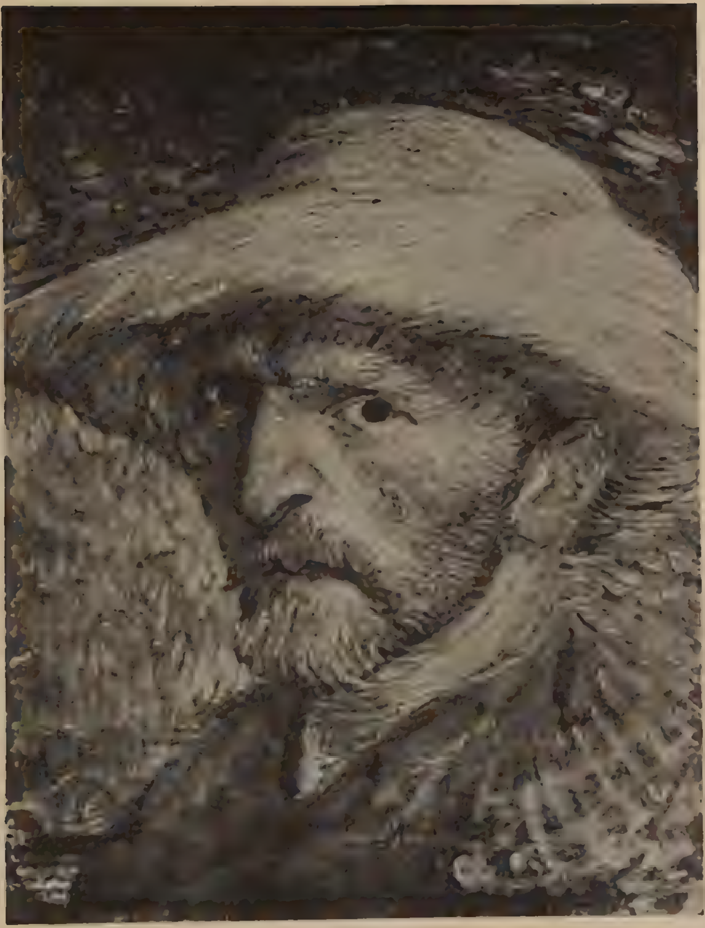
And before the later Renoir, one thinks of a Rubens who had descended to the Latin sea and had become more saturated in its sunlight. Especially when this painting, with its quality of flowers and mother-of-pearl, spontaneously mingling the pulp of the fruits and the sap of the corollas, goes down to the burning beaches, whence the trees seem to spring forth like subterranean flames, and where the gulfs and the sky unite in the expanse of gold. Above the blue and pink villas perceived through the branches of the pines and the olive trees, and above the russet walls of the old castles on the heights, the distant mountains arise, and their glaciers send forth fires and, between the waves and the clouds, pile up flames of mauve from the diamonds cut from the azure by the twilight or the morning. Then all the waters sing, the apples are about to fall from the tree, the anemones swoon, and the



RENOIR. Child writing (*Private collection*).

resplendent orgy of the colors, of the odors, and of the murmurs turns around the broad nude flesh spread forth in the heat. The form of the arms and of the breasts, of the torsos and of the legs, becomes concise and circular, like those vegetable organisms teeming with the blood of the heavy seasons. The carnal poem is spiritualized upon contact with an admirable love which embraces it in its ensemble, which no longer sees a detail, an accidental, an isolated or rare gesture, but only full masses whose inner force models the movement. It is a summarized and heroic movement, with a voluntary and profoundly expressive use of projections and hollows, of lengthenings, deformations, and foreshortenings of arms and of legs. As the first evolution of Renoir calls to mind Velasquez, and the second recalls Rubens, the third, I do not know why, makes me think of Michael Angelo. He is quite unaware of this, he paints in absolute freedom, and the direct sensation still passes into the crippled hand, which interprets it ingenuously, after having tempered it in the flame of the pure mind. The natural forms all meet and marry with curves suited to them, with volumes swelling with the same inner forces, and with a movement discovered and created anew by the same heart.

Those legs and those arms undulate like that stream, this torso is round like that tree, these breasts weigh and swell like those ripening fruits. The song of joy shouted in the burning shadows, in the curling of the waves and the streaming of the flowers, creates a kind of swooning silence around those women, recumbent or seated, or at play in the living water, and their wavelike forms continue and balance one another with an ease superior to that of Raphael and a plenitude superior to that of Jean Goujon. It is a plenitude full of movement, which beats to its very depths and trembles in the light, where the air, the reflections, and the dew of perspiration marry with it in order to sculpture it summarily. It is a plenitude in which blood quivers and milk germinates, and where, in the cloudy faces, in the fleshy lips, and under the whole tense and vibrant skin, animal life abounds, and all the mind evolving in it. Never, perhaps, had the profoundest and simplest instinct for living passed from flesh and from eyes into the soul of a great painter, to be sent back into flesh and eyes by that soul. Those babes clinging to the heavy breasts, those vibrant arms which support them, those little beings whose form still hesitates and who lean over a page of writing or over a toy, those little girls with red hair whose astonished eyes open so wide as they marvel at the world, and those young mothers who have grown heavy, express with such intensity the peaceful majesty and the inner, mechanical circulation of life that they seem to be on the plane of life, merged with it, and issuing from the same hearth. A grand animality breathes in them, in its peace and in its power. The gestures and faces of family life, the eternal attitudes of the dance, of the toilet, of distraught meditation, of abandon, of joy, and of repose, live innocently within them. Carrière saw those canvases and the great, red-chalk drawings like things of the antique awaking from a long sleep, and the profound charcoal studies in which the childish and maternal forms are fused, and despite his too didactic striving for spiritual transposition he never attained the expressive power of their structural form, independent, even, of the miraculous harmonies with which Renoir surrounds them and permeates them. Universal life inundates the most furtive gestures of the play of maternity, of love, and of childhood in the sun and in the grasses, and there is no metaphysical need to tell of this life. Here is the most secret mystery of the greatest painting, a pulpy, fruitlike substance un-



VAN GOGH. Self-portrait (*Private collection*).

confined by the living lines, its boundaries marked out by turning masses and moving volumes, and brought, by an infinite circulation of colored particles, into its intimate relationship with the whole of space.

III

Igor Stravinsky [1] has crowned the spring. Already before him, the youthful painting of France bore witness to the decomposition of the old rhythms, and saw, coming to birth out of the chaos, troubled harmonies, relationships at once touching and uncertain, and lines, sounds, and forms groping to find one another. As it was barely beginning to suspect the power of the edifice raised by Cézanne, as it still felt but incompletely the influence of the lyric transposition imagined by Renoir, it was manifesting a singular freedom of intelligence and of impressions. One might have said that it was thus substituting for the reasoned Impressionism of the visual sensation transcribed with fidelity, a kind of impressionism of the total sensation transposed with innocence. Still insufficiently equipped for that task, it was thus returning to the tradition of the greatest painting by the path of schoolboys.

The rhythms revealed by Bonnard and Vuillard on one hand, and by Matisse and Marquet on the other—sometimes by Jean Puy and, on those days, with a lyricism of matter and of color as compact and pure as a flower or a gem—are, I certainly believe, among all the most significant ones, the former by their character of spontaneity, as if they were quivering and moving in the incessant and surprised germination of embryonic life at the edge of a furrow—the latter by the preoccupation with essential equilibrium and with fundamental organization which they reveal, with more

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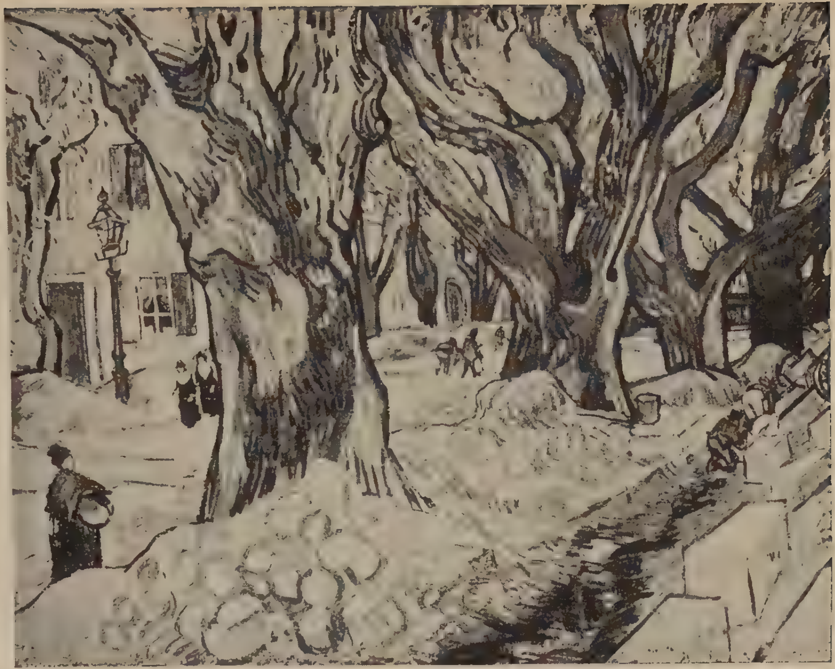
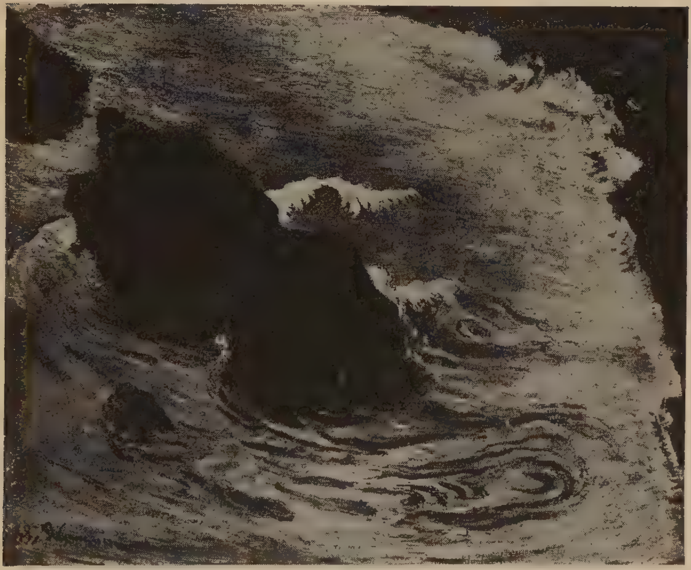
[1] (Translator's note: *Le Sacre du Printemps*, by Stravinsky.)



Van Gogh. Street in Arles (*Private collection*).

innocence in the one case and more science in the other than is generally believed. Already the reaction against these painters has begun, while they are still young, for it is their misfortune to live in a period when neither fashions nor systems last for long. Perhaps, moreover, it is not the fault of the period, for no other has been so rich, none, in so short a time, has become so rich in acquisitions of the senses, of poetry, and of sentiment, all cast one upon another in a marvelous disorder. People are forgetting that, at the very time when Cézanne and Renoir were finishing their task, these painters were continuing the effort of the Impressionists toward freedom of sensation, and were thus restoring to painting the rights of the imagination; people forget how their minds were prepared by these artists to receive, with an ardent impartiality, the unforeseen contribution of the schools and of the epochs which were in no way concerned with European tradition, and which thus broke down the last resistance of Greco-Latin academism.

With all the impassioned and confused decorators of that time of confused passion, Vuillard, Bonnard, Valtat, Roussel, d'Espagnat, and Albert André, we were witnessing, toward the end of the last century, something recalling a very brief period of blossom between a winter and a summer, a being emerging from slumber. There was an uncertain swaying in this art, doubtless, with Valtat, an obscurity due to the force of his brilliance, but there was also evoked the primitive organization of a world in which the purest essence of the most profound color might emanate from matter itself in order summarily to define it, red from the central fire, blue from the high sea, and rose from the peaks covered with sunlit snow. . . . It was too well-informed an art with Roussel, too much impregnated with culture; radiant, generous, lyrical, but perhaps a little too negligent, too abundant, with d'Espagnat; and, on the contrary, direct, measured, discreet, savory, but a little timid with Albert André. And with Vuillard, a minute embroiderer of intimate symphonies—with his satin, his brocaded velvet, his feathers of changing color, and his silk threads powdered with pollen—an unprecise, and often even an irresolute but tender poet of the moral atmosphere circulating around beings and things, this art is a little too careful to surround the houses of the intellectuals and of the people of fashion with discreet psychological harmonies in which the spirit of painting is at times too much subjected to the phantoms and the puppets which dwell in these houses for a day. But this art is living, and it bursts forth and is

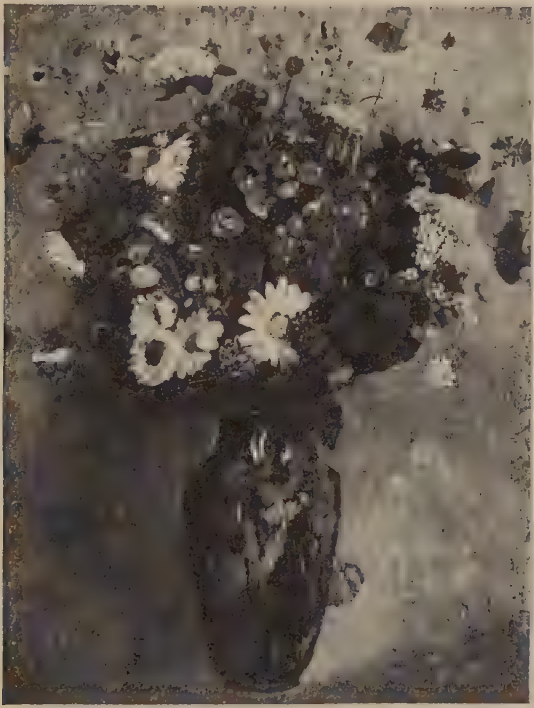


CAUGUIN. The Wave (*Private collection*).

symbolic in its innocence with Bonnard, the miraculous illustrator of ancient and modern life, the poet so unforeseen in his spontaneity, the astonished searcher, and the extravagant story-teller, who recounts the monotonous adventure in which our own intellectual incertitude unrolls among the fanciful lines of an instinct ever amused.

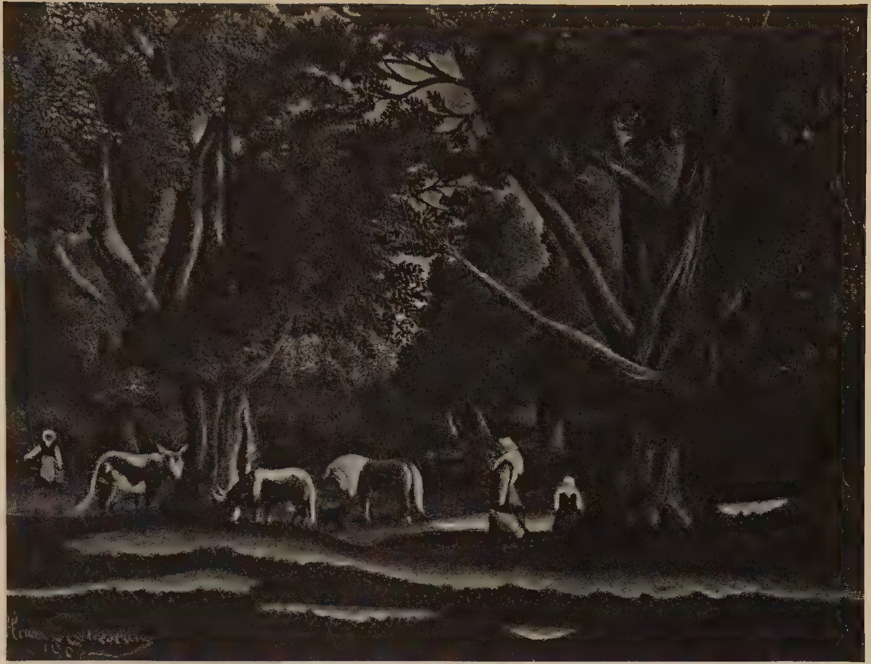
In those singular decorations, which appear shaken and commingled by some quaking of the earth, one has the sensation of a world decomposed into diffused tones, from which, here and there, there emerge embryonic forms which tend to group themselves and organize themselves along unknown lines. The glacial art of Odilon Redon, of a spirituality so rare—a mottled tremor on the surface of a transparent and suspected water in whose depths there may be mother-of-pearl and coral, and which, in the literary manner, symbolizes these obscure fermentations sufficiently well—is the antithesis of the work of these artists, for it tries to catch in the crystallized sheen of its jewels and its flowers that which is only hesitation, tremor, passage, and undetermined movement. But the Russian Ballet carries into the plastic rhythms the formidable orgy of Oriental colorations, and mingles impassioned gesture with the color of sounds, and the intoxication of the eyes with the transports of desire. And Debussy introduces the perfume of gardens into the sound of drops of rain, sways brilliant pollen to the murmur of the trees, and whispers with the confession on trembling lips, with memory and secrecy. The universe turns to a more and more precipitous rhythm. The dance and music are transposed into painting. And Bonnard is perhaps the central sensibility in which that confusion takes place.

I know nothing of his life. It effaces itself. If I were acquainted with it in all its gestures, I should know less who he is. I cannot resist an affection for it as it reaches me through the universal and continuous quiver of his painting. It is one of those lives which proceed without a halt from daily activity and the inner world to the moving and multiple form which constitutes its physiognomy and its daily confession. Consider what he brings to you. Do you not find the man himself in those wooded masses cut by luminous alleys, and in those flowered lawns where children and animals run and frolic? It is the movement of his



Odilon Redon. Flowers (*Private collection*).

mind that is revealed in those trembling bouquets, those slender stalks, and that whole fragile splendor of flowers and pure water and in transparent glasses. Strewn flowers, light stuffs, and mirrors reflecting delightful apparitions—it is through you that I know him. Along that path which he has followed to reach that room where your harmonies penetrate one another, brush by one another, and enchant me with their tangled and furtive reflections, like a vague music, he has tarried everywhere. He has leaned on this bridge, to watch the river gathering up a sky of troubled silver through which run shudders of turquoise and of sapphire. I have surprised him at the corner of a lane of mauve, where, with the delight of a child, he was observing that a lantern all askew, a little shop window, a garbage can, the greasy pavement, the gutter, and the most humble animals and the poorest people participate in the glory of the mist and of the sunlight. With comic or tired gestures, the jewel, the faded rag, the mottled fur, or the downy plumage, the quivering ear, the wagging tail, and the leaping, snorting horse, all obey, and enter, without effort, into the whirlwind of his soul. Everything obeys joyously, as if to merit the enchanted tenderness which attaches him to everything that lives. The iridescence of opals, of emeralds, and of jet, and the limpidity of translucent stones into which the lightest down of the flowers and the pollen blown from their corollas penetrate and mingle, have, by their aërial voyages, made me appreciate his heart. That which is most spontaneous, most fugitive, most light and delicate on all moving surfaces is that which he gathers up and mixes, to model his fleeting form, to make his skies recede, and to embroider his diffused world into imponderable harmonies, in which the drop of water, the blade of grass, the butterfly's wing, and the elytron of the insect furnish, if he desires it, the



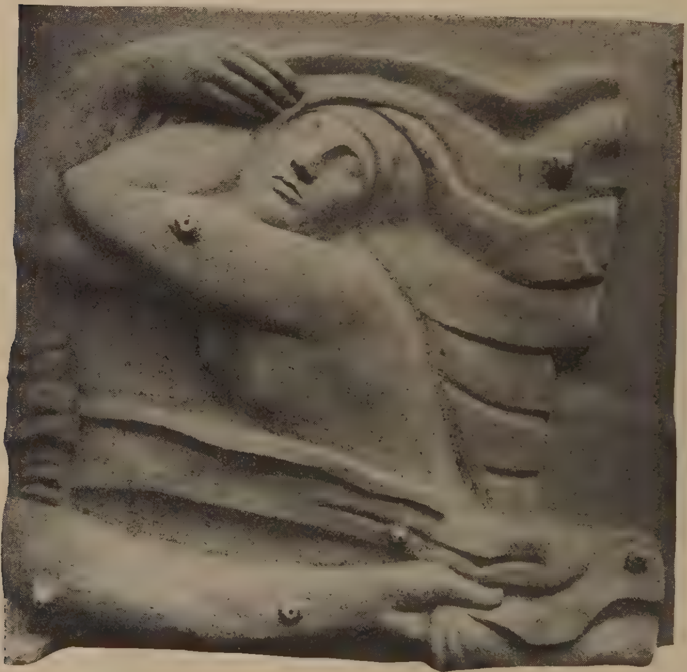
Henri Rousseau. Pastoral (*Private collection*).

central and colored motif around which his whole universe turns.

Has he perhaps been called an "intimist"? It is quite possible. And if it is true, the discovery is a comic one. He is in the intimacy of all life. He flows and flees like the secret force which circulates within things. I cannot halt his unseizable mind in the blowing hair of a little girl as she dances or runs, in the ball of wool that slips from the basket, in the brisk gallop of a colt, in the circle that widens on the water, and in the growth of little plants. He wanders through nature like that dull movement which manifests the spring and which reveals itself everywhere by the rising in everything alive of the liquids which nourish them. And, besides, he is the spring. Like the rarest artists, he gives the impression of having invented painting. And that is not only because, everything in the world being new for him each day, he expresses it in a new way, but also because he comes at the dawn of a new intellectual order, and because he is the first to arrange, according to a rhythm unknown to all before him, the good old harmonies which have made us what we are. I have been told that Bonnard was an expression of decadence. Decadences ferment, and the ferment of decadences builds the future monument.

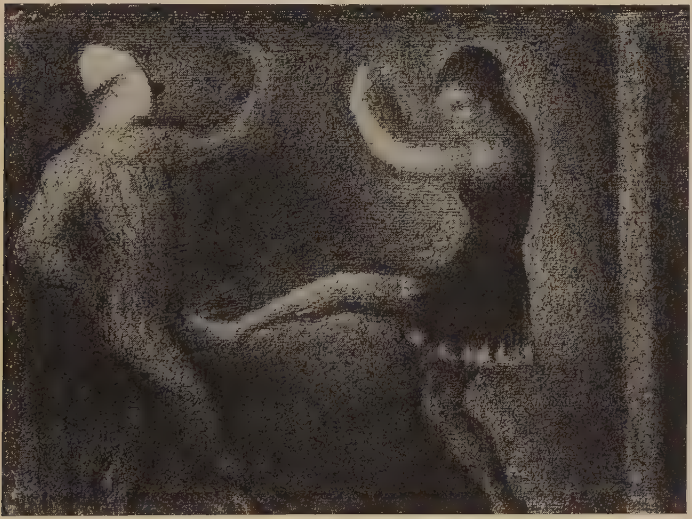
I perceive all the less that irreducible opposition which is claimed to exist between Vuillard and Bonnard, and the young painters, who say that they are to-day building this monument in their reaction against Vuillard and Bonnard, because, while the latter, precisely, were doing their work, Matisse, less spontaneous, more reflective, and more doctrinary, but like them deriving from Impressionism, was attempting to draw from Impressionism itself the means of erecting a systematic construction of color. His activity is inseparable from theirs, as the activity of Cézanne and of Renoir is inseparable from Impressionism, which gave them their point of departure. In general, the future attends to the reconciliation of the contraries which are only faces of the same reality. The disciplined orgy in which the sumptuous still-lifes, and the flaming expanses of Morocco and of Spain saturate, with dark harmonies and with brilliant notes, the most rapid portrait, the most summary landscape, or the decoration most strongly inscribed in a few directing lines and a few dominant tones, would show a didactic power of will in Matisse, which is entirely lacking in Bonnard, if one did not ultimately discover in the former a second ingenuousness which is only a progressive gain of control over the personal elements of his equilibrium. In his case, to be sure, there seems to be a willful awkwardness. But that is because it expresses a desire at once lucid and impassioned, to reunite the material harmonies dispersed throughout our needs. All things, in this art, are reduced to the essential indication of the structure of their form and, more especially, of their color, which causes them to assume an unexpected splendor in the unbroken silence around them. Each one becomes the symbol, direct, concrete, and voluntary, of a central idea which presides over the choice and over the association of the tones, and over the disposition and the direction of the lines. Whether he paints a portrait, a still-life, a landscape, or nude women dancing, the arabesque is always there, dominating in order that it may direct, master, and give shades or subtlety to the harmony, whose rhythm comes from it, and with which it plays as a bow draws forth from the string sonorous waves which it swells and contracts. "Nature" is pretty far away. The artist imposes his system with such rigor, such exactitude and logic in the relationships of his sumptuous elements, that he creates a plastic universe of the richest accent.

I think, indeed, that, for this reason, this painter is the one who, least of all since Cézanne, causes one to think of the subject which his works represent. They tend untiringly to organize his universe from the angle of painting alone, absolutely delivered from the attraction of sentiment or of the picturesque in the object. At bottom, they express no object. At all events, the object is, with him, no more than a pretext for the creation of new organisms, which a powerful love for form is alone capable of imagining. And thereby, the recreated object attains a life infinitely more general,



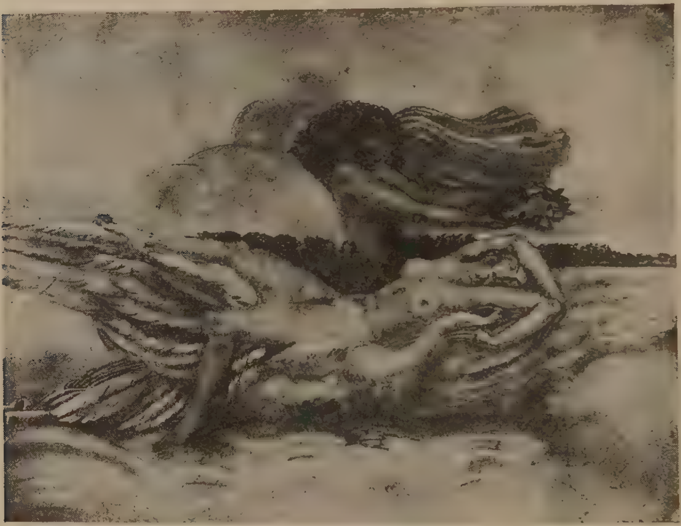
Bourdelle. Decorative Fragment (*Théâtre des Champs Elysées*).

in the first place, but also, unexpectedly enough, infinitely more direct, than that which it is supposed to represent. . . . See how, on a red background, the play of the blacks, of the grays, and of the yellows is concentrated, or the play of the grays, of the yellows, and of the reds, on a black background. In the one case, abstract space hovers like a liquid atmosphere; in the other case, we see a mirror in which the light is absorbed. The uniformity of that background which, with a bad painter, would be the most banal of means for masking his indigence, becomes, in the hands of Matisse, the rarest instrument for manifesting the most voluntary and the highest distinction. One would imagine oneself *seeing* music. The most decisive paintings of Matisse make me think of Chinese porcelains, or of hard Japanese lacquers, immobilized,



SEURAT. Drawing (*Private collection*).

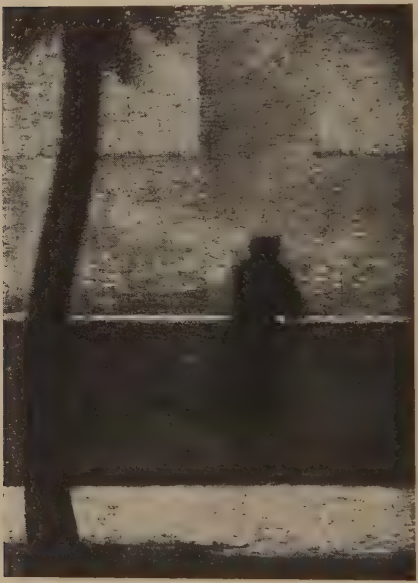
as it were, under some deep water, and in them Goya's power for surprising life seems mysteriously united with the silent and lofty soul of Velasquez. I am thinking of those mat surfaces, almost black or red, in which some solid apparition—flowers or a face—surges up from the silence, in the ardent solitude of its own reality. It is quite evident that this alone, perhaps—I mean the distant impression which he gives of a chromatic didacticism of the kind used by the Orientals—has not been willed by him. But the forms of sensibility expressed by the art of the Far East have entered so deep into the reason of the Occident that today they determine one of the most splendid aspects of its regenerated symbolism. Were I acquainted with the frontiers of the object and of the subject, curiosity as to the world would be extinguished in me. The



Bourdelle. Leda, fresco (*Théâtre des Champs-Elysées*).

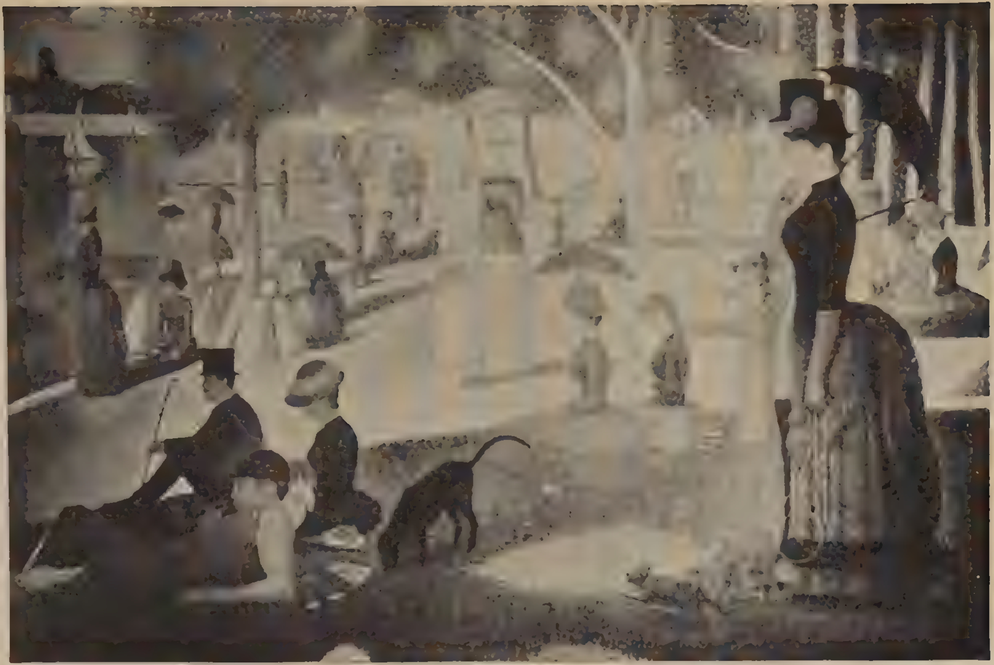
grand style lies precisely in their secret meeting, and in our impotence to determine its place. And that, I certainly believe, is what gives to Matisse's painting a decorative majesty which it is practically alone in possessing, at a time when almost all painting tends to decoration. The picturesque and the anecdote draw away from it. Music rises from it, in absolute silence.

A great lesson, which begins with Cézanne, and which very few have been able to understand. The painting of Dunoyer de Segonzac, somber and dull, and less decorative, moreover, and above all that of Charles Pequin, more traditional in appearance, are the only ones to-day which give me that immediate musical impression; but with them it is less striking, it is veiled like some chamber-music, which the former sends winding about in sensual arabesques, and in which, with the latter, there arise the purities and the sonorities of the violoncello, against a harmonic mass as solid as a monument. With the former, a quality of heat in the paint, which seems mixed with mud and a little gold, twists the expression like a clay, while the india-ink draws it out into the long frail flames seen among the branches of winter. With this painter, a stirring quality, which seemed almost lost since Chardin, and which one finds to this degree only with Cézanne, reappears in painting: one would say that it was from within, that the color, in ripening, saturated the form, which, on its side, might be said to model the color. The light, the reflections, and the shadows play into the thickness of the paint itself in order to incorporate it with the movement of the masses as they seek their own depth. These inner exchanges are almost poignant in their unweakening intensity, and they maintain the rights of the sensual imagination in that "constructed" form which all are seeking in our day—the recent rôle of Cubism being to keep alive the need for it in the intelligence. Charles Pequin, like Segonzac, represents French measure, whose future, in the presence of the current invasion of foreign ideas and sensibilities, we do not know. Thanks to these artists, thanks to L. A. Moreau, less of a painter, but quite as determined not to renounce the teachings of direct emotion, thanks to Despiau, the sculptor, the purest of the image-makers of France, and to his closely modeled faces, in which the expressive masses alone survive the original emotion, French plastics will perhaps regain its path.



Seurat. The Quay (*Private collection*).

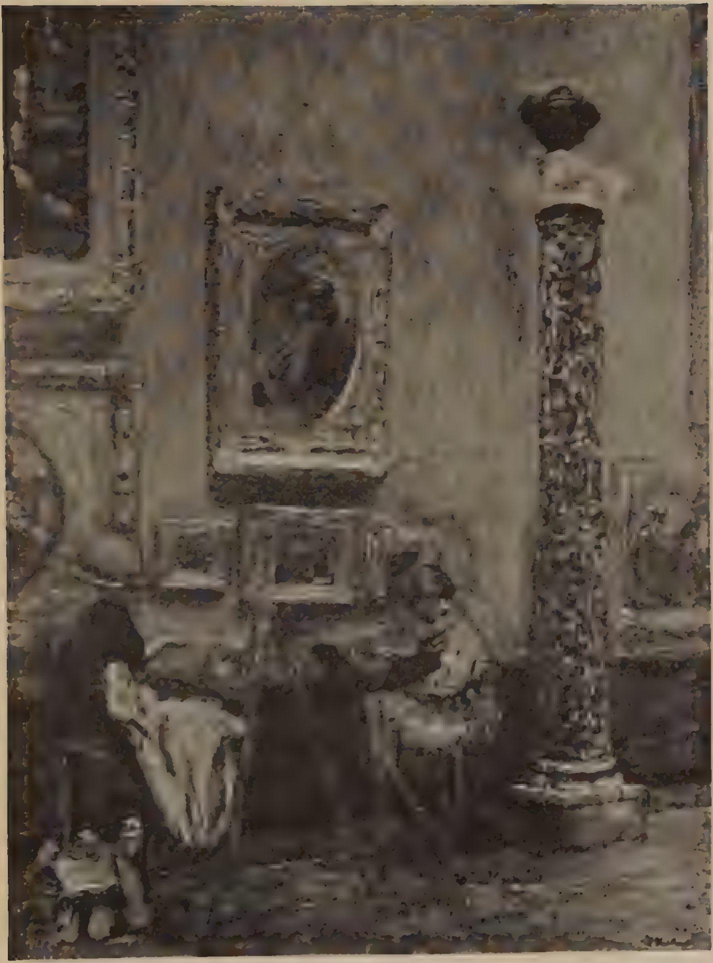
The art of Marquet, on which Matisse leaned heavily, at least during the time when they began together, seems to me to have been the first step in that direction which tends, by a revolutionary reversing of the disabled ship, to a rejoining of the national tradition of measure in lyricism, and of simplicity in expression, which one finds in this country with the great and the little masters, from Foucquet to Corot, passing through Ingres sometimes, through Joseph Vernet, Chardin, Louis Gabriel Moreau, Claude Lorrain, and Poussin always. If one insisted absolutely upon discovering



SEURAT. The Île de la Grand-Jatte (*Private collection*).

the origins of Marquet, it is there that one would have to seek them. But classic art resides in harmony between the faculty for feeling and the faculty for comprehending, and not in any particular manner of painting or of drawing. The origins of Marquet are the quays, the bridges, the river, the monotonous streets which open up, and their shop windows, their signs, their flags, and the pathway of sky between the embankments of the roofs. The ever similar construction of his canvases has in it something of an absolute necessity, like that of the streets themselves, of the rivers, of the quays, of the bridges, of the roofs, and of the sky. Is it ingenuousness, or is it skill? I know nothing about that, and no more does he. In his viewing of a landscape, of a city scene, or of the sea, the means is always so simple that it disappears. If he suppresses something that bothers him, or accentuates something that touches him, no one sees that he has done so.

It will be clearly seen that such an intelligence of things does not occur without a profound, intimate, and living culture. But he never parades it, any more than he does his taste for the picturesque. He seems more enamored of skies filled with mist and smoke, of snow, of sleeping water, and of the places where the adventure of modern man unrolls, between the door of the factory and that of the slaughter house. But he is at home in this Paris of the Cité, where Notre Dame and its pedestal, the quay, the bridges, and the river with its canals, seem to impose on the very sky, on the clouds, and on the airy and golden light diffusing everywhere, harmony, concrete clarity, logical distribution, and spontaneous measure. And he has penetrated with authority into the blond opal which incloses the seas of the north. And he is very much at ease in the flame trembling around the masts, the smokestacks,

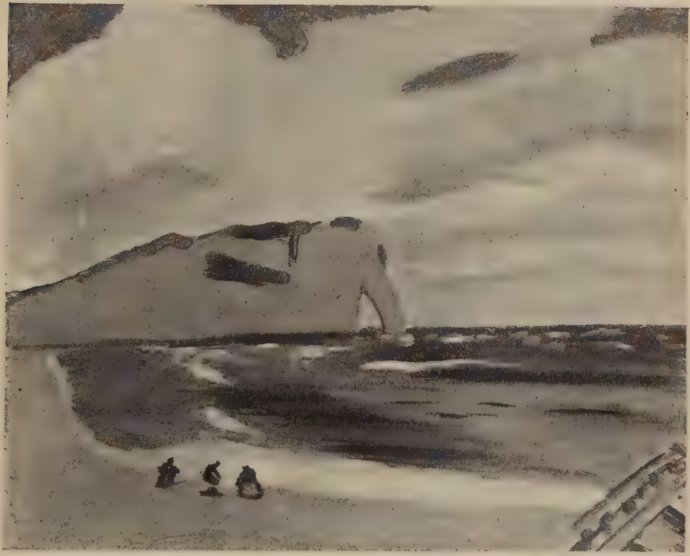


VUILLARD. The Copyist (*Private collection*).

and the pennants on the roadsteads of the sun. I know well that this ease is too often made up of a careless misunderstanding of architectonic foundations, excused, however, by the startling exactitude of the vision. The values stammer, but they are so sure that they transport into the painting the exact perspective of the city and of the planet, and the exact gradation of the sky. Sometimes the houses sway, and the roads are askew. A sudden change of tone on the same quay, the same bridge, or the same river would destroy the harmony of plane of the picture, if it were not exactly what brought life into the whole, and if the approximate construction and the impeccable values did not impose unity upon it. One would say that elements of nature are seeking one another, beginning to organize themselves, uniting awkwardly, and making an attempt at some evolving equilibrium, for which they are propped up and made fast by some inner force.

IV

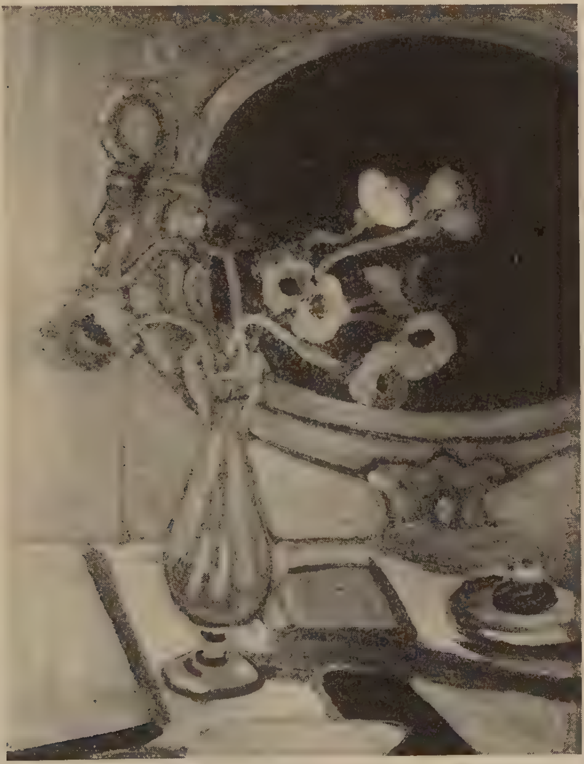
Here, then, are certain authentic artists whom the new tendencies assume to dispossess from the direction of men's minds—I speak of those issuing most directly from Impressionism, for it seems to me that in the case of isolated men like Charles Pequin or Despiau, none of the criticisms addressed to these artists by the most uncompromising "constructors" can touch them, and leaves them on the road which goes from Cézanne to Derain. As a matter of fact, all painting and all sculpture have, for twenty years, turned around the indifference of Cézanne and of Renoir toward that which is not plastic expression, the first stage of a feeling for general subordination to some impersonal monument which we do not perceive, but which, with them and at their very time, during the full tide of Impressionism, the full tide of naturalism, others, like Henri Rousseau, were sketching roughly without knowing it or, like George Seurat, they were already trying, with an acute consciousness of that fact, to build it up consistently from all sides. The unbroken candor of the one, and the sovereign intelligence which, with the other, never ceases organizing and spiritualizing its gifts, seem, in our day, to penetrate the influence which these two masters exert together, and in them is summarized the effort of the nineteenth century in France to give, with that influence, a strong skeleton of plastics to that feeling: I persist in believing that neither Bonnard, nor, above all, Matisse, stands in any opposition to it, and that, on the contrary, by giving the final freedom to poetic



Henri Matisse. The Cliff (*Private collection*).

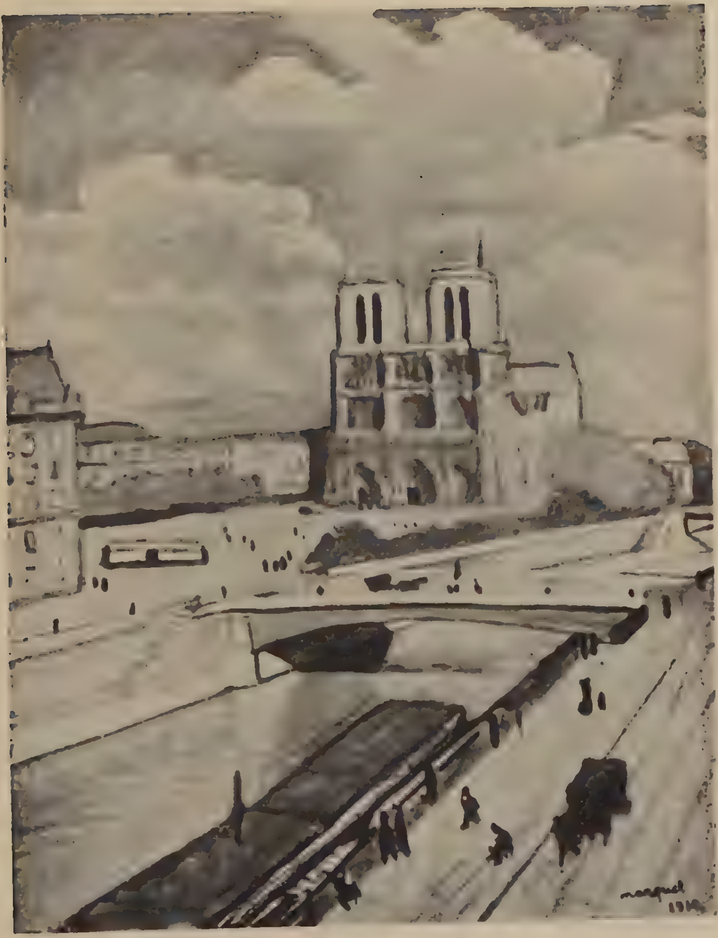
sensation and to chromatic sensation, they have contributed to clear the way for the most singular innovators. Was it not only yesterday, in fact, that Seurat was considered a Neo-Impressionistic dissociator, and that a bare few—and I was not of the number—perceived the purity and the calm of his rhythms, free and cadenced like figures in a dance, and his masculine power of representing to himself the most picturesque, and even the most commonplace, universe under monumental aspects?

The feeling I speak of is new only in its unanimity. The renaissance of great decoration which has been going on for a century, announced it, unknown to all. And from the fact that the painters of to-day reject all decorative intention, one should not conclude that these two movements oppose each other. To speak of the setting, also, is to imply subordination. But the decorators of the last century had not understood, and would not have been able to understand, that contemporary edifices were not built for them, that they were survivals of an outworn period, and preceded another period whose style, even to-day, is not born: their ambition was a noble one even if misdirected, their attempt was an isolated one, not standing outside of painting—let it suffice to cite Delacroix and Chassériau—but foreign to the preoccupations and to the means of a majority of the painters of their time. However, painting was, even independent of its destination, to assume certain decorative tendencies. The object for its own sake was diminishing in importance, even when it remained the sole pretext for the sculpture or for the picture. And it was an essential part of the phenomenon that these tendencies were to be observed among the most unlearned and the most cultivated of the artists. One surprised them thirty or forty years ago already in Henri Rousseau himself, a contemporary, without knowing it, of Puvis, of Redon, and of Cézanne; he was an old innocent, a real primitive, a Giotto without training or culture, a customs officer certainly, and doubtless as unqualified to perform that work well as he would have been for the functions of an academician; but he was haunted by tropical landscapes so luxuriant, so pure, so fresh, so full of brilliance and of candor, so far from us, and so near to imaginary para-



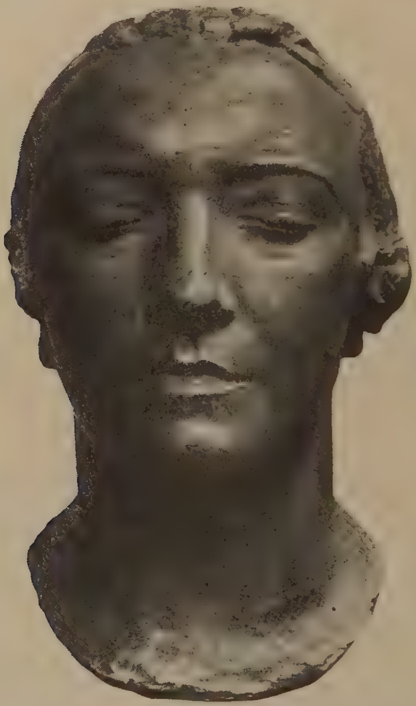
Henri Matisse. Flowers (*Private collection*).

dises and to miraculous gardens, that everything grows pale at times and effaces itself when hanging with these paintings which go beyond all bounds, like green plants, or like carpets of the Orient. The decorative tendencies burst forth in all the Neo-Impressionists, insistent or repentant, in Seurat first, with his tremendous faculty for impressing upon his naturalistic "subjects" an architectural aspect; in H. E. Cross, with his fervor so charming and poetic; in Signac, an enchanting tapestry-maker, weaving the skies, the atmospheres, the waves, and the masts out of solar light, and not fearing to see the division of the brush strokes as the very instrument for decoration. In J. P. Lafitte, it was as if a band of iron was stifling the new growth, which burned in him and which the war ended. One respected the tendencies in Maurice Denis, with whom they are didactic, dogmatic, intent on recreating a whole system of classicism, and obstinately turning toward culture at a time when restlessness and invention were bursting forth everywhere. In Pierre Fauconnet one saw the decorative resolved to go beyond the limits of the picture, to address itself to the accessories of the theater, to invade costume, and to spread over social and fashionable life, which Raoul Dufy, on his side, impresses with his lyricism at once profuse and precise, a thing of fantasy, whirling and ordered, like a dance. One finds the tendencies again among the young painters most eager for innovation, and thus Dufresne's paintings assume their aspect of shimmering and sumptuous carpets. One accepts the decorative, as it results, in some cases, in a conscious archaism or turning to obsession—an almost painful one, and insistent upon introducing romanticism into the new house, in the case of Bourdelle, the only artist of to-day to possess the instinct of the higher symbolism. His art is full of flame, but of smoke also, and it is expressed

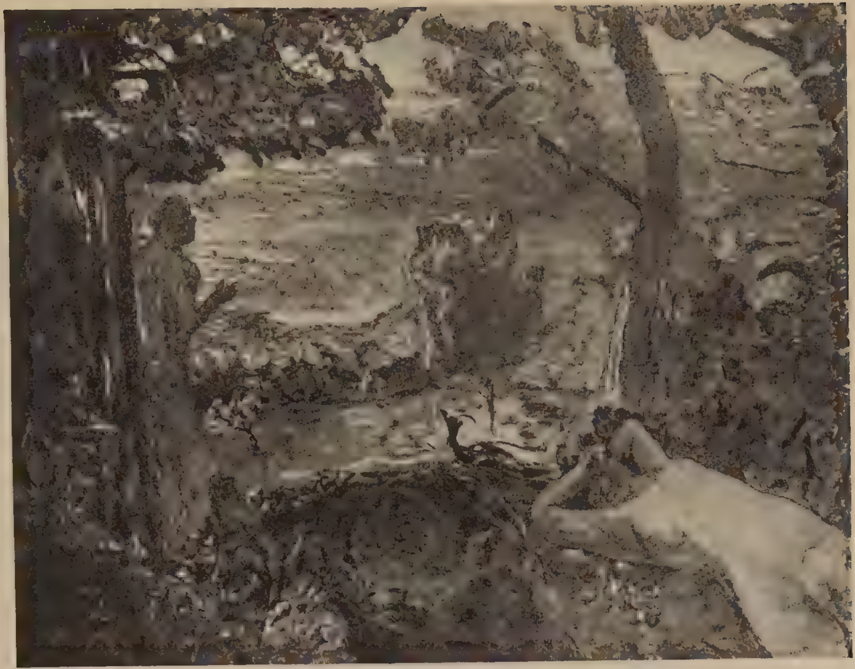


Marquet. Notre Dame (*Private collection*).

in a language which is not always his own, wandering, in its inner torment, from the Gothic men to Michael Angelo, from Ingres and from Carpeaux to Rodin, from the Assyrians to the Hindus, and from the Egyptians to the Greeks: however, in his art, whether fresco or sculpture, there is a lyric force in which the thought, accustomed, in general, to use a different language, twists and stiffens in order to make itself understood, and gives to the whole work an ardent tension which ends by imposing itself. One surprises the decorative tendencies in the heavy statues of Joseph Bernard,



DESPIAU. Portrait of Mme. D.



BONNARD. Decorative panel (*Private collection*).

stones intoxicated by their power of sweeping upward the density and the awkwardness of stone, and sketching, with an archaic note, his images of games, of innocence, and of love. One admires the robust achievement of the decorative, as it comes forth from the earth with fruits in the hollow of its hands; here it has given us works hard and round, and modeled like a column, in the sculpture of Maillol, which would, with sufficient fidelity, symbolize the birth of a season, if the indeterminateness, the vague murmur, and the undefined and sensual love that lives in Oriental color, in music, and in the dance did not express the same thing in a manner at once more direct and more diffused.[1]

The imagination of the peoples, in their enervation, turns, indeed, around an invisible flame whose focus is in Paris, and into which each one feverishly casts the treasures and the refuse of its old soul. The most important contributions from abroad have been those of Holland and of Spain; the former country, already many years ago, brought forth Jongkind, and above all van Gogh; to-day it has the bestial and resplendent van Dongen, while Spain makes her voice heard, yesterday with the savage and solitary Regoyos, with Julio Antonio, a Roman of Saguntum, who died, almost a boy, overcome by the weight of his bronzes, to-day with the monotonous, candid, sharp, and perverse Iturrino, and with Picasso, now a genius, and now a man of skill. But aside from these, French painting alone persists in the dispute of the schools, and constitutes the nucleus of a world art impatient to burst forth. Germany, at the end of the last century, possessed certain interesting painters like Leibl, Liebermann, a kind of feudal retainer of French Impressionism, and Marées, but German art developed by itself, stiff and didactic, outside the symphonic movement of which France was the center, and its present-day "Expressionism"[1] denotes only a social movement, for the moment, in which Kokoschka alone seems, with his confused and muddy quality of paint, to be preparing realizations which count; his character is exasperated, his violence is chaotic, and his "expression" sways, to be sure, but its fire and its life afford an art whose savor is undeniable. Hodler, the Swiss, was a vigorous professor. Belgian art since Meunier offers but little more than one isolated figure, James Ensor, who, with frail forms and pale harmonies, revives the marionette-theater spirit of Breughel and of Jerome Bosch. Italian art, before it flowers again, seems to await the full effect of the new urge which Italy is feeling and which

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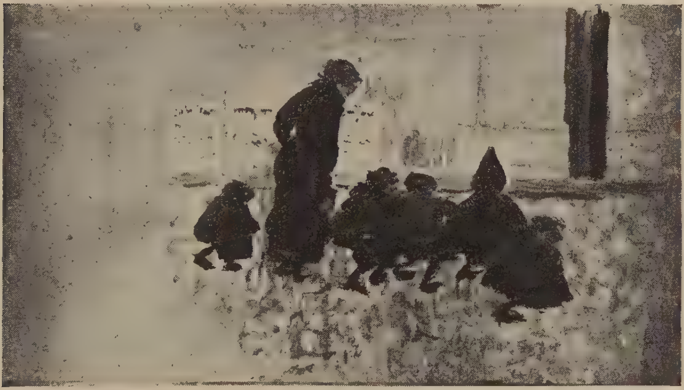
[1] See Appendix, (*b*), p. 497.



BONNARD. Going to School (*Private collection*).

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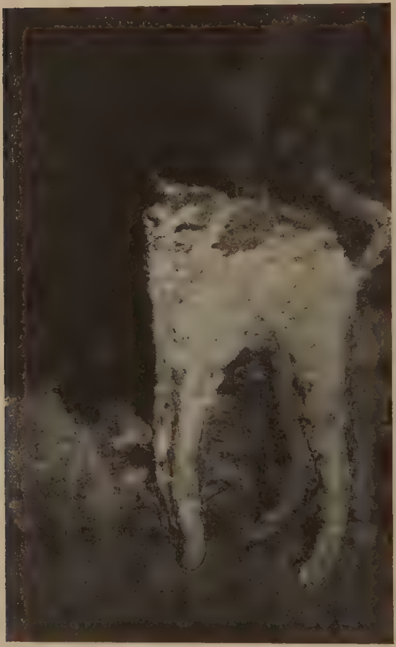
[1] This "expressionism" is perhaps nothing else than a transposition of the impressionistic state of mind passing, if I may be pardoned these barbarous terms, from French objectivism to German subjectivism, and from the plastic plane to the musical plane. Impressionism, at least at its beginnings, assumed to express itself with any means that came to hand, provided the impression was exact. Expressionism teaches that one must express oneself with any means that comes to hand, provided the expression be personal.

is manifesting itself especially, up to the present, through the trenchant character of the forms of its industrial or naval architecture — forms such that only America has found any that are as decisive. Modigliani, the morbid and feverish poet of hands, of bodies, and of faces of women, which he notes suddenly, with a light, eager, and flowing brush—the poet of distortion, of sensual deformation, of flesh, of hallucinating eyes, and of the energetic Italian grace which surges up, warped by the Semitic ferment, after two centuries of sleep—died too soon for us to be able to deduce a general principle from his furtive apparition.



BONNARD. The Cat
(*Private collection*).

Meanwhile, in France and outside of France, outside of the schools and in the schools, one comes upon parallel phenomena at every step. With the most restless of the artists, form assumes a special instability which reminds one of that of the primitive organisms.[1] With those who are most guided by the will, one finds a rigidity corresponding with the fixed images of geometrical abstraction.[2] In the one

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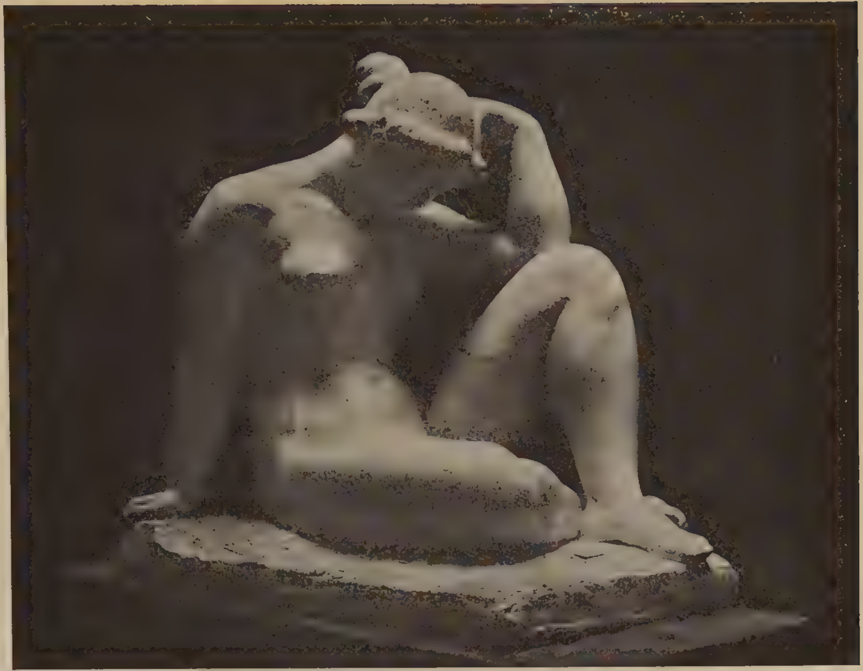
[1] See Appendix, (*c*), p. 503.

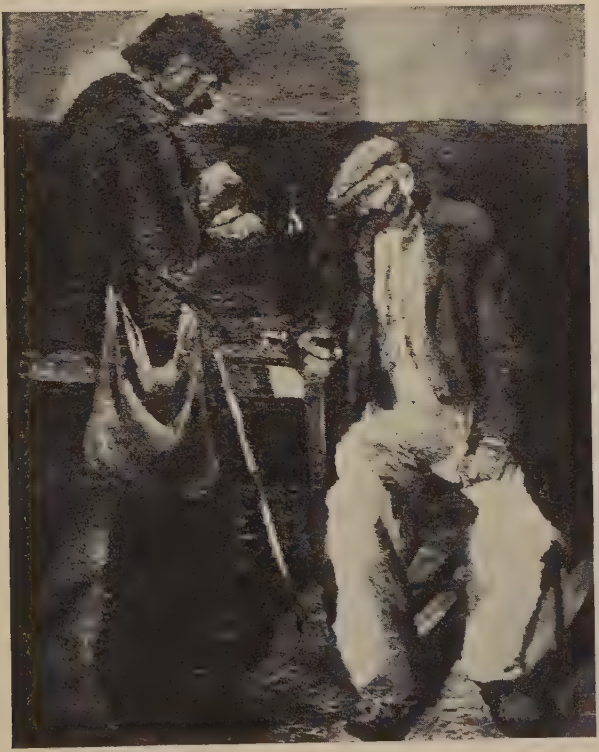
[2] *Ibid.*, (*d*), p. 503.



MAILLOL. Woman Seated, plaster.

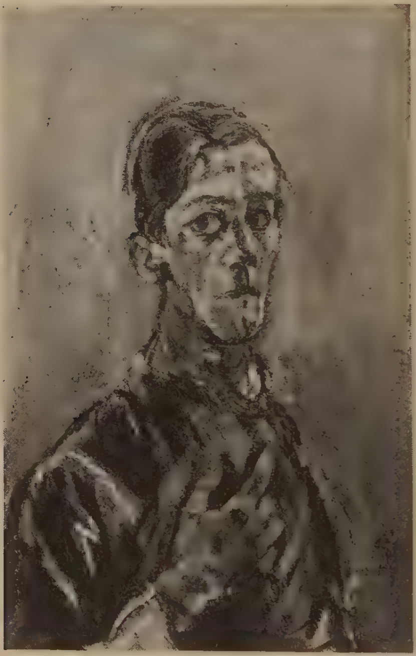
case, there is an attempt to force the expression of time into the plane of space, the only one at the disposal of painting. In the other case the attempt is to express in this one plane all the dimensions of space. . . . After Braque, a Frenchman of France, comes Picasso, a Spaniard of Andalusia, in whom the Arab dream is continued, and its impassioned pursuit of ideographic form through the natural forms reduced to their geometrical figures; Picasso tries, for the first time in Europe, to create a universe without contact with the real, with the pretext of placing in evidence a dimension of which, if I conceive the thing rightly, the "value" already expresses that which can be expressed on a flat surface. "Plastic equivalence" has existed for a long time. It is, first, architecture, then furniture or pottery, and then geometrical decoration, the arabesque, and the carpet. It can coexist with plastic "transposition," can frame it, complete it, and influence it. It cannot replace it.

Meanwhile, Picasso is not anchored to it, but turns around it, leaves it, returns to it, uses it as another instrument in his orchestra, and has been careful not to comment on it or even to baptize it—the word "Cubism," like "Impressionism," was at first a term of sarcasm—and with Picasso the movement has broken its narrow dikes and resounds from one place to another, over all the sensibility, all the thought, and all the energy of to-day. The restlessness of Picasso is one of the most ardent leavens in our contemporary fever. It is a nomadic but fruitful restlessness, which stirs up the springs, and the mud at the bottom of them, and the flowering plants that grow on them, a perilous dance of the intelligence as it seeks unheard-of equilibriums on the sharpest summits of sensation, suddenly giving up one game to fling itself into another, a work that is uncertain, and dramatic just through that fact, admirable in flashes, and quite frequently disappointing. But it is always impressive through its attention to character, its constant bent for style and for purity of the form, which is cleared of all incident, and through

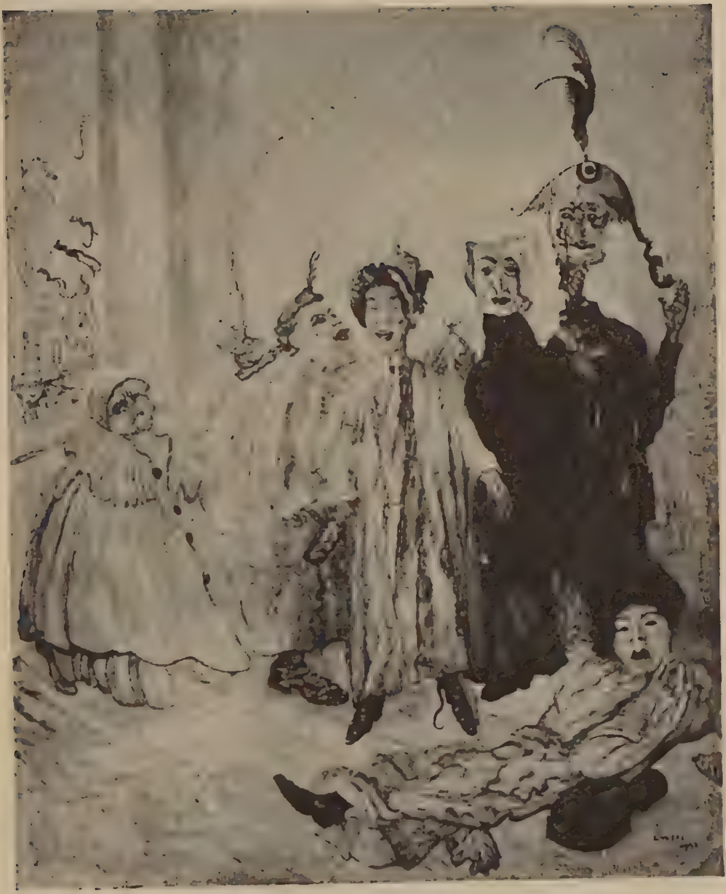


DUNOYER DE SEGONZAC. The Drinkers (*Private collection*).

its disinterested desire to find in the undulations, the swellings, the taperings, and the contrasts of lines, the law of structure of the masses which they symbolize, and the law of continuity of the monumental ensembles which they, when taken together, make up for the dance, for play, for swimming, and for repose on the seashore. It is a work of singular importance, for by its play it demonstrates that what was formerly called "composition" is a system of equilibrium, a general form, which the undulating lines constantly bring back to turn, like tongues and crowns of flame issuing from one hearth, and moving around a central point which is the veritable "subject." It is a confident work, for it opens up hope to so many painters, by its free rehabilitation of fantasy, of invention, and of poetry in painting; confident in its intoxicated and lucid twists at the point of the pencil, and the edifices it builds, unforeseen, but logical as a dance. It has a quality of unexpectedness besides, not allowing one a second of respite in its unceasing evolution, its sudden leaps, its bizarre acts, its feats, its wild whims, and its inflexible reason. And yet it is essential, through its definite break with the Impressionism which Cézanne, Renoir, and Seurat had brought back into the great pictorial tradition, while preserving all its gains, but which,



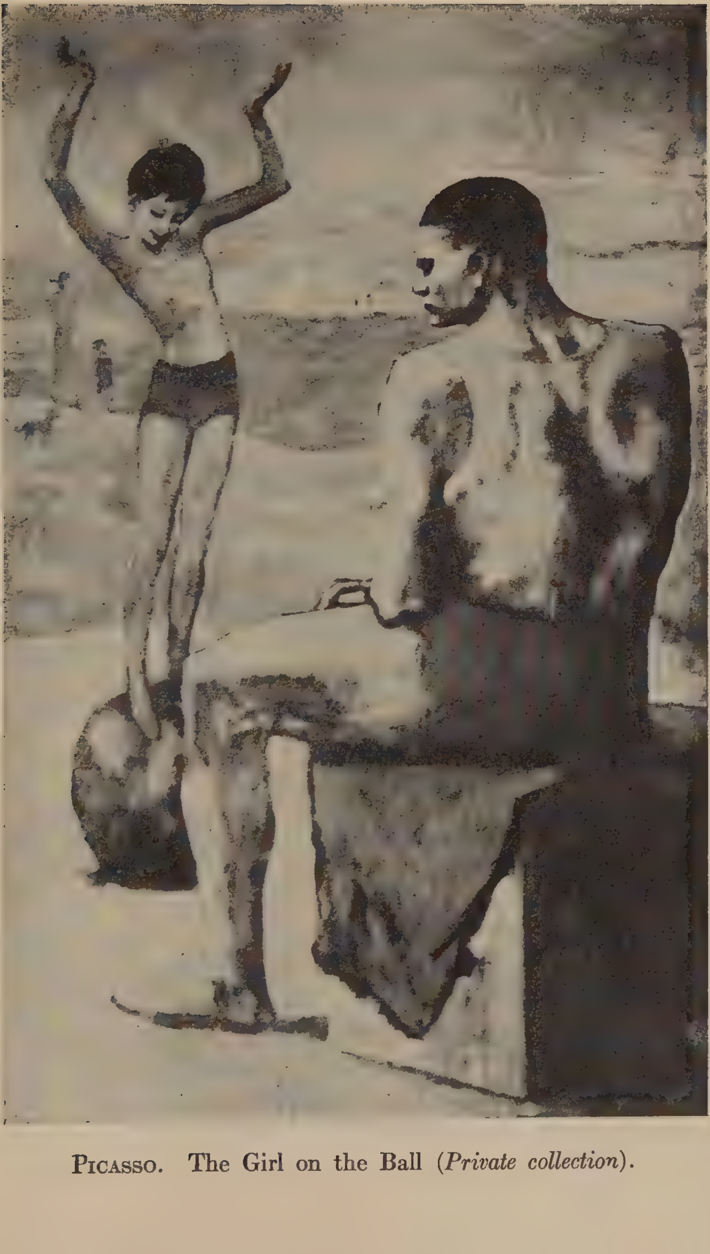
Oscar Kokoschka. Self-portrait (*Private collection*).



James Ensor. Masks (*Brussels Museum*).

again, was preventing all their descendants from manifesting architectonic invention and plastic imagination. But this work of Picasso's is dangerous also, in its indefatigable wandering between museum painting and magazine illustration, in which latter field he gives scenes of the circus or of the life of Bohemia, lugubrious visions which turn at times toward the laughable, phantoms, boneless puppets, faces of fever and of famine, and surprising but learned forms whose line, through their constant attention to style and to calligraphy, very soon separated from that of the tradition of the marionette theater, which we first find with Daumier in France, which was lightly touched by Manet and Cézanne, to be taken up again by Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Seurat, and in our day, carried by Rouault, in the bloody mud of his paintings, to its paroxysm of character, of somber and burlesque tragedy, and of sadness and of horror. And the work of Picasso is dangerous for those who are fascinated by the ability to do what is merely difficult, and dangerous perhaps for the one who performs these feats and who seems—I say only seems—sometimes to have renounced being merely a great painter in order to watch how others imitate him, and to note the surprise in the faces of the public.

For now is the time when, around this work people anathematize, preach, didacticize, and dogmatize. They bring forth Revelations of the Truth. They quarrel, as in the heyday of the School, over the preeminence of form or of color. They lose their time in cursing or in travestying "Impressionism," which, meanwhile, is nothing but ashes. And as they say that it is necessary "to construct," each one proposes his plan. They resort to deformation systematically as, in bygone days, they used to idealize systematically, thereby, even while they curse romanticism, ingenu-

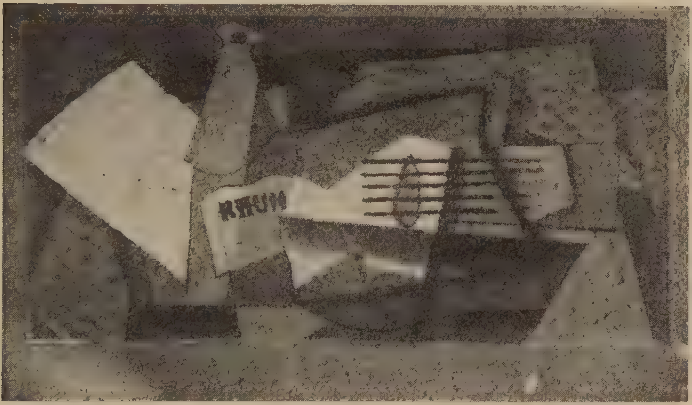


Picasso. The Girl on the Ball (*Private collection*).

ously substituting a romanticist academism for the classicist academism. In a few months they exhaust the teachings of one after another of the great dead things which took twenty centuries to evolve. The Negro replaces the Greek in the preoccupations of a new doctrinism. The noble Greco-Roman of the old studios disgustedly throws aside his heroics and his helmet in order gravely to seize the tom-tom. They declare themselves primitives as a reaction against the skill which is everywhere; they declare themselves archaic in order to obey the demands of a culture which is at once weary of its science and eager to draw from it synthesized conclusions. They forget that a system does not suffice to create a great art, and even less to create a great artist. When one seeks order, one expresses oneself, one does not demonstrate to others the manner of expressing order.

Of all these confused movements, all that one needs to retain are the collective desires of which they are the symptoms. The art of to-day, despite the artists themselves, still too much given to assuming a look of singularity at any cost, is, unknown to itself, protesting against that individualism uncontrolled by its own discipline, into which a part of modern Europe is sinking, after having reached thereby one of its most splendid flights. A new intellectual order announces itself. And the "constructive" effort of Cubism may be regarded, in this sense, as a stirring symptom. Decorative in itself, it ruins decoration to set up architecture.

Here is the real crux of the problem, which the architect will resolve, but which certain works of painting or of sculpture—after having assimilated, in a few redoubtable years, the immense contribution of the Oriental arts, which see things in great masses and with pure profiles—are already proposing to the evolving consciousness of European humanity, with a power which constantly impresses one. "Nature" now retires to a secondary plane. It is, decidedly, no longer anything but a "dictionary," as Delacroix said it should be. Conceptualism is reborn. This is not the place to say whether Europe is playing its true rôle, and whether it is not too exhausted to take up once more the enormous labor of Asia in constructing a monumental universe which shall elevate form in itself to a level where it would sufficiently justify destiny and effort.



Georges Braque. Still life (*Private collection*).

In any case, Europe is attempting this, and attempting it in Paris.

André Derain, who is at the center of this decisive movement, seems to reconcile, in time and space, the most distant and most antagonistic worlds: he shows us hallucinating settings, saturated blacks, disturbed oranges, massive nudes, profound and heavy portraits,[1] and vigorous landscapes in which there is a meeting and the beginning of a fusion between the tragic sense of space of Sesshiu and the Chinese, the attentive lyricism of Lorenzetti the Sienese, the ingenuous imagination of Rousseau, the customs official, and the geological density which characterizes Corot—the whole seen as if through a layer of transparent water,

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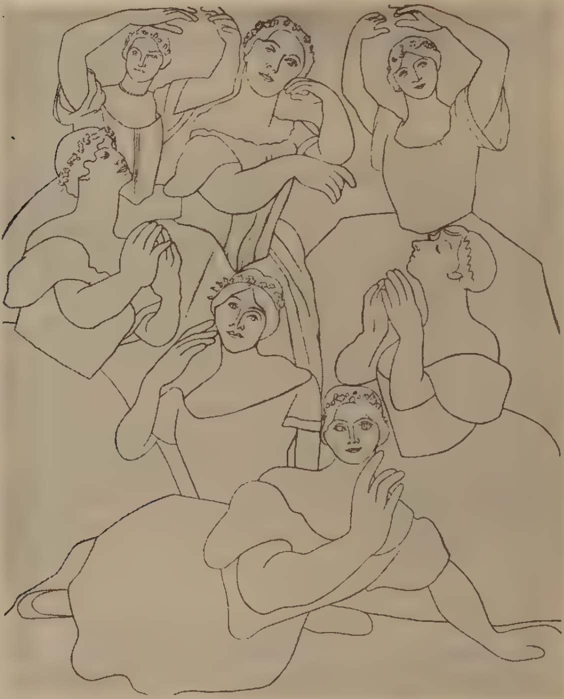
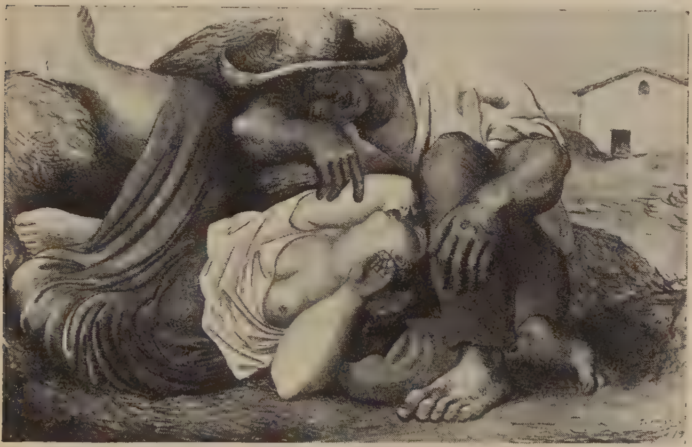
[1] See Appendix, (*e*), p. 503.



PICASSO. Dancers, drawing (*Private collection*).

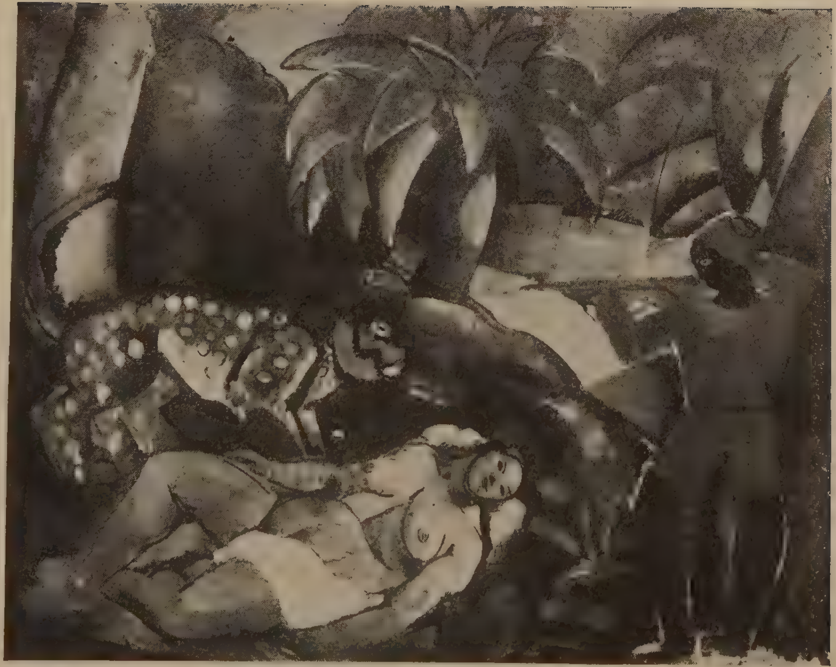
a polyp world, coral-like and crystallized. It is in this powerful painter, I believe, that we find the result, in our day, not only of the example of Cézanne and Renoir, but of the whole decorative effort which followed it, and especially of the whole constructive effort, that feeling at once irresistible and vague, around which

Picasso unrolled his precise arabesques, but which, always and from everywhere and with Picasso himself, encountered the central, haunting, and invincible preoccupation of subordinating the whole of plastics to some monumental idea of form, in which the idea of imitating it gave way to the determination to comprehend its structure, its norm, and its meaning. Take notice, besides, of the fact that André Derain has had the exceptional strength, in the whirlwind of systems, of crossed influences, and of innumerable revelations, in which we have been living for twenty years, to bring this whole thing back, by a slow, broad effort, to the external and the spiritual aspects of his country, in which Corot, Delacroix, Barye, Renoir, Claude, Poussin, and Foucquet would recognize themselves without difficulty.



Picasso. Reapers Resting, drawing (*Private collection*).

A majestic unity characterizes the painting of André Derain to-day. Like the greatest among the painters

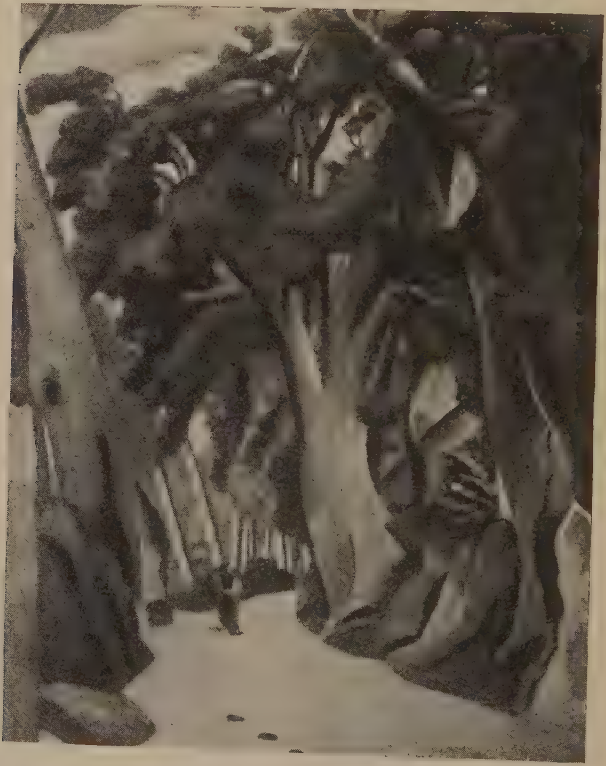


Dufresne. Decorative panel (*Private collection*).

—and like the greatest only—he resolves the incessant contradictions of appearances by intuitively reaching and by bringing into relief that which Baudelaire called the universal analogy. A skull; a stretch of country in which the skeleton of the soil marks its outlines; a tree, and a human torso, nude or draped—obey the same forces, whose direction, simplicity, and accent are revealed to us by the union of the light caressing, and of the color saturating the surface of their volumes. Now his pictures seem cast, as a block, in some unknown metal, colored from within by some deep force which appears to spread over the surface of this block its dull wave, in order to saturate with somber gold this shoulder, this neck, and this forehead, to illuminate this eye with a gleam as of stone, to pour some thick nocturnal wave into this heavy hair, and to run through these twisted branches, or this hilly plain, with the central fire which passes into the sap and into the rock. One would say that they had issued from some subterranean forge, where a hot lava mingled and fused with red bronze and silver would assume, under the blows of the hammer and the work of the file, the summary and compact form which no accidental, no incidental, is capable of disintegrating. There are still, with Matisse himself, preoccupations foreign to form, as might be expected from so enchanting a colorist, however pure and disinterested he is. Here the concentration has become almost tragic, and, although very French, through the measure, the sober harmony, and the spontaneous equilibrium, it is rude, brief, and massive like a primitive idol discovered in the soil.

V

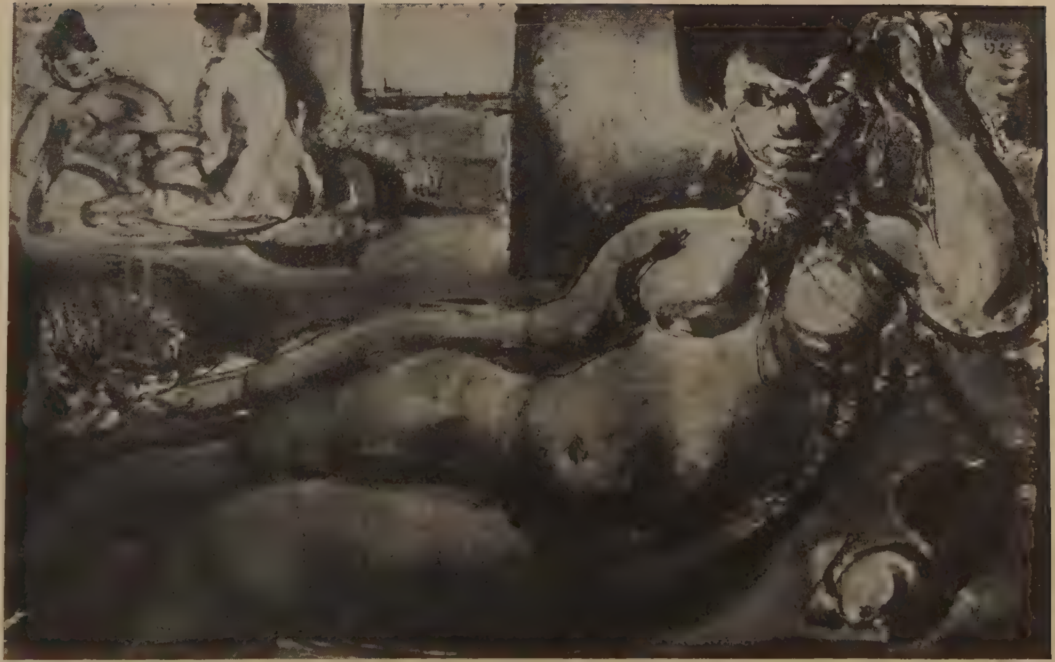
Certainly, there is a new springtime for mankind. A tragic spring, like all springs when murder and rutting passion combine to increase and multiply the energy which makes for fecundity. In these rebounding values, in this jumble of painting where the forms drag the backgrounds with them confusedly, and where the blackgrounds reunite with space only after having brushed against the forms in order to gather up their echo, I perceive a kind of artless genesis. Our memories of Hindu art, of the "Paradise" of Tintoretto, of the entire work of Rubens, of the myth of Evolution,



ANDRÉ DERAIN. The Road to Castel-Gandolfo (*Private collection*).

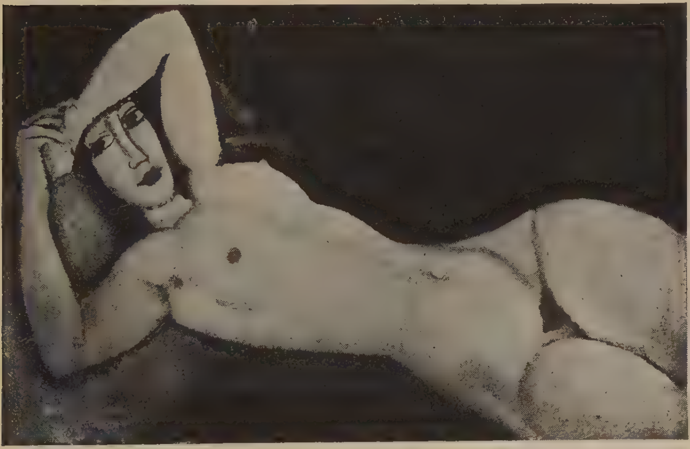
the love for the great music which has developed among us, Dostoievski, Nietzsche, Whitman, the awkward and essential architecture of Cézanne, and the painted symphony gained by Renoir, everything signifies the approach of some great agreement, unknown as to its methods, but for which these dispersed forms which seek to rejoin one another are a primitive appeal. The universe is remaking itself. The floating character of the values of plastic art corresponds to the indecision of science, to the fundamental instability of life which the biologists are revealing to us, to its attempt to fix itself in an architectonic rhythm, and to a collective defense against that instability. Whatever the opinions of an ephemeral school—and every self-respecting school is ephemeral—painting retains space as its domain, and will not escape from it. But the gradually increasing importance which we give to time has stealthily introduced itself into our former idea of space. The cinematograph causes it to be born and to die there, to be reborn and to die again under our eyes, precipitating into the counterpoint of universal and continuous movement that which painting, in former times, fixed upon canvas: volumes, passages, values, associations, oppositions, and contrasts—which modify one another, reply to one another, interpenetrate, and become entangled, ceaselessly and in all the dimensions. And now, everywhere and all the time, evolving and vague relationships of an irresistible accent are being established.

Exhausted by solitude, man, in a word, calls to man, in order together to build the house, and the unemployed decorators consent to immolation in order to converge their spiritual forces in the erecting of a temple which they will not see. The new order, creating the new architecture, simple and bare like every organism in its youth, will destroy decoration, or will



Georges Rouault. Nude (*Private collection*).

transform it in such a manner that its present attempts can teach us nothing as to the form which it will assume.[1] All the things which, for twenty years, we have been thinking of as realizations, are perhaps nothing more than symptoms; symptoms of a rebinding, symptoms of concentration.[2] The most visible one is the increase in the spirit of association from which the social framework will probably come forth.



MODIGLIANI. Nude (*Private collection*).

The war is a most cruel one. But also it is perhaps the one which has had most influence in constraining us to look at ourselves, face to face, and to look within ourselves. In reality, it is of rather small importance that a great number of those who feel the universal need for communion should go to ask of dead political systems the secret of the new order. That is a symptom. It is a symptom also, and one of the most impressive, that we see in the insistent effort which Germany has been making, for a third of a century, to bring her triple hegemony, military, industrial, and intellectual, into the single frame of an architectural style determined by the will, a style whose simplicity is a pedagogical acquisition which has taken its elements from abstraction and from the past.[1] A symptom again is that audacity of the Americans in erecting monstrous utilitarian constructions which shatter all known styles, in the brutal rush toward the sky of their metal framework, and in their continual effort to rise higher above the cities. And symptoms, above all, are those rational forms which have issued from applied science, and which gayly thrust into the ruins

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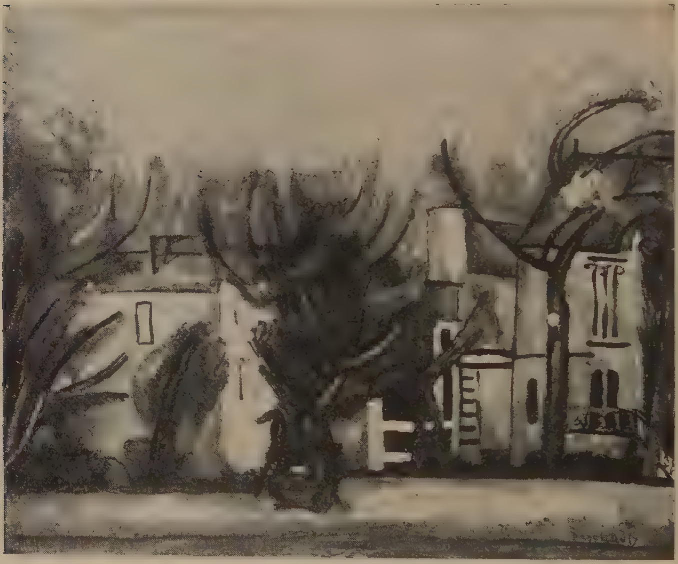
[1] See Appendix, (*f*), p. 507.

[2] *Ibid.*, (*g*), p. 507



Raoul Dufy. Houses (*Private collection*).

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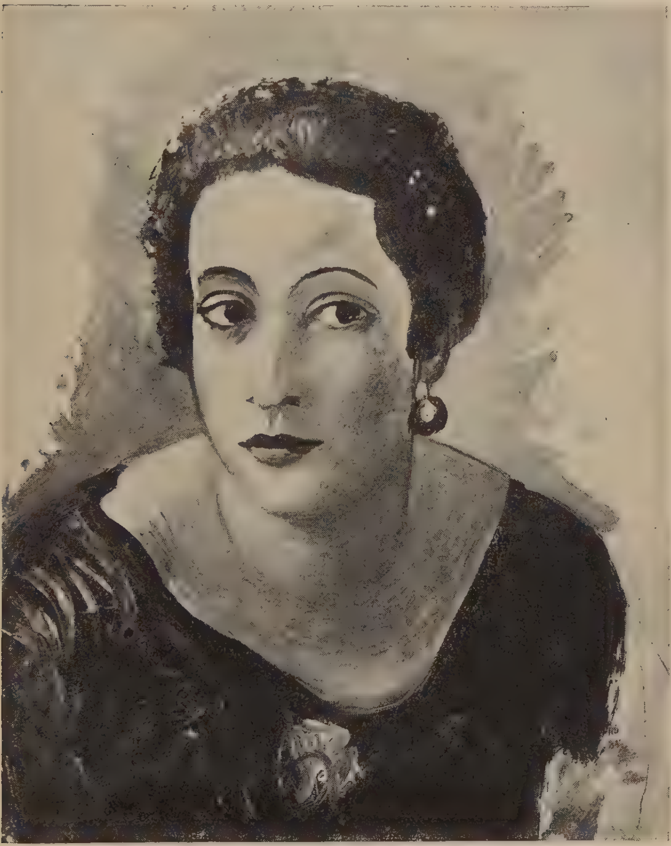
[1] *Ibid.*, (*h*), p. 508

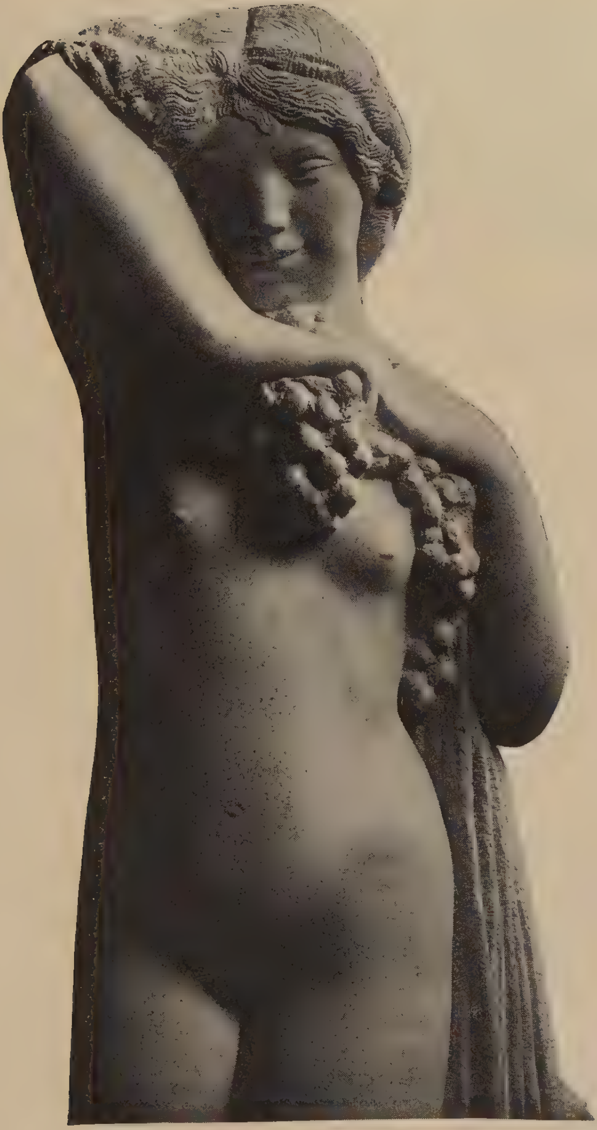
all the disordered habits, even though they call themselves the traditional habits, of the art of building. A great mystery is being wrought. No one knows whither it is leading us.



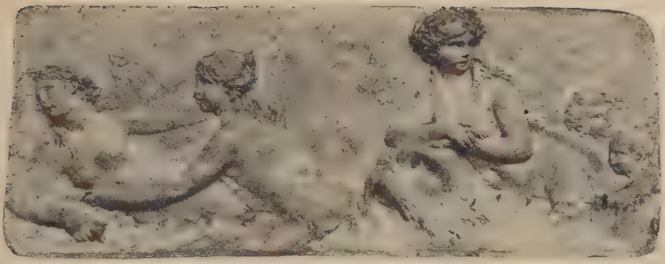
ANDRÉ DERAIN. Portrait of Mme. C. (*Private collection*).

Here are the tall chimneys like temple columns, the living animals of steel, with a heart, intestines, nerves, eyes, limbs, iron bones articulated like a skeleton, the turning, the sliding, the mathematical coming and going of belts, of pulleys, of connecting rods, and of pistons; here are the rigid roads, shining, and extending, and intersecting to infinity, and the silent round of astronomical cupolas following the movement of the skies; here are the giant halls, and the bare façades of the factories, cathedrals dedicated to the cruel god who knows no other law than that of unbounded production. Here we see the industries of war in agreement with the industries of peace, and, boiling with them in the bloody crucible of the future, the marine monsters of metal, the gigantic insects which fly with their harsh buzzing, the cannons which hurl their drama more than twenty leagues, the armored dragons which crawl like caterpillars, spitting flame and poison. . . . All of that is clear cut, without ornament, trenchant, categorical, and having the purity and the innocence of the function—indifferent to good, to evil, and to morality—of the function which is being born, endowed with an appetite which is fierce, insatiable, and joyous.

American Architecture



JOSEPH BERNARD. Pomona.



Clodion. Bas-relief.

APPENDIX

(*a*) We know the principle of Neo-Impressionism or Pointillism as it was sketched by Pissarro, developed by Seurat, expounded by Paul Signac in his book, *De Delacroix au Néo-Impressionnisme*, with masterly clearness, and carried to it highest point of decorative expression by Signac himself and by H. E. Cross. Here the question is no longer one of merely separating the tones, as did the Impressionists, who, moreover, often mix them on their palette in order to obtain the effects demanded by nature, but instead, of isolating the touches themselves on the canvas, in order, at a distance, to provoke optical mingling and, by this procedure, to obtain the maximum of purity in coloration and in luminous intensity. This is the final effort of the spirit of analysis, the final expression of political anarchy, a principle scientifically exact and æsthetically dangerous, like all æsthetic principles. The artist takes one of the *means* of painting for the *sole purpose* of painting, and remains the prisoner of a technique which can no longer undergo variations or make progress.

(*b*) I could multiply examples. The most anarchic period, seen in its ensemble and from a distance, is always a single thing, for it runs in the movement of life for which the language of man is only a garment, more or less severe or uniform, or, on the contrary, shaded, overloaded, multicolored, and hesitating according to the diversity and the number of the needs, the tastes, and the fashions which contribute to its formation. No epoch has been richer in artists than ours. And all are admirable decorators—or would be if we knew how to utilize their passion. It is not more difficult to find these tendencies in the fiery sensuality of Dufrénoy than in the close and solid richness of Manguin, not more so in the logical and dense construction of painted matter which defines Charles Guérin, than in the patience of Lebasque when he embroiders his universe with a somewhat loose stitch; the tendencies are as marked in Jean Puy's constant striving toward purity of form as in the gift of sudden and complete evocation possessed by Laprade; as marked in the broad vision of color, a little dull and uncertain, with Camoin, as in the voluntary juxtaposition of tones and forms which give to the landscapes of Friesz both their intellectual and their chaotic aspect; and as marked, once more, in the concrete language and the sense of the intimate setting in the work of Albert André as in the meeting, dear to Francis Jourdain, of the most appropriate decorative style with the love of family life. They show quite as well in Flandrin, passing with a touch of melancholy from the studied graces of the eclogue to the pampered graces of the dance, as in Alfred Lombard, who is perhaps too much preoccupied with carrying his sumptuous gifts into the frame of a classicism, about which opinions may differ, and which is too narrow for him. The decorative tendencies are as manifest in certain drawings of Bernard Naudin, trembling and melancholy like leaves swept by the wind, as in many sketches by Maxime Dethomas, silent, neutral, and hallucinating, like apparitions, or in all the illustrations of Delaw, large as frescoes, touching as legends, and deep as the heart. With the productive, abundant, and indefatigable d'Espagnat, they cover earth and heaven with flowers and would suffice to define the sensuous optimism which, with Renoir, arose as a reaction from the naturalistic and romanticist despair. One breathes them also in the work of René Piot, surrounded by poisonous perfumes, sumptuous certainly, but vitiated by reminiscences of Florence, by literary intentions, and by Byzantine Platonism. One discovers them in the boldest efforts of the neo-constructors who react against them, Lhote, Bissière, and Lotiron. With some of those who claim descent from Cubism or who have been influenced by it, men like L. A. Moreau, Le Fauconnier, and Lurçat, they assume a grand aspect, a monumental one, so to speak, which can furnish painting with the most fecund resources. Corneau, Gabriel Fournier, Riou, and Portal hesitate to give them up. One surprises these tendencies again among the women painters, in an incipient stage, as they see things with a certain confusion in which the form and the backgrounds merge as if in a dark matrix swelling with heavy heat; thus the decorative appears in S. van Parys, Charmy, and especially in Louise Hervieu, in whose work it seems so astonished at being alive and so incredibly innocent, after our ten thousand years of rottenness and knowledge, and we see it in Marval, Blanchard, and especially in Marie Laurencin. One notices that foreign artists escape from it no more than Frenchmen, if one interrogates the work of van Dongen, the Hollander, the bestial poet of jewels and of rouge, and of the profound voice of the flesh where death and cruelty keep watch in the warm shadows of the arms and the mouths like carmine wounds; or the work of Iturrino, the Spaniard, monotonous and subtle, and arid as a dry earth where a few blood-red flowers grow among the stones; or the work of Vlaminck, the Belgian, which seems like burning mud; or that of Paresce, the Italian, sharp, acid, trenchant, pointed, and Florentine, without being aware of it, through the power of atavism; and the essays, at once convulsive and lucid, of the disconcerted Picasso, and the gigantic, ill-formed, and geometrical illuminations which grow out of the earth of Russia, whose images come to us in the confused, driving uproar composed of the sobs of famine and of despair, of the cries from murdered men, of the crackling of machine-guns, and also, doubtless, with the wailing of a new-born world. The Poles—Kisling, Mondzain, and Wittig—would seem, on the contrary, to be in reaction against the decorative tendencies. As to the sculptors, to whom Rodin had opened the way with his "Gate of Hell," almost all are following the decorative tendency—Bourdelle, Maillol, and Joseph Bernard, as we have seen, Halou, Abbal, Marque, Sabouraud, Durio, Hoetger, and Duchamp-Villon who was carried away before his time by the war, were beginning their reaction. Lipchitz continues that effort.

This movement, moreover, is only attaining its critical period, from which will come its expansion if the soil of society is favorable, or else its end. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, indeed, the great decoration, so little understood in the seventeenth century and almost abandoned in the eighteenth to make way for the intimate ornamentation of the bedroom and the boudoir, has tempted all the great painters, beginning with Delacroix. But the true initiator, as Maurice Denis has shown in his book, *Théories*, is Ingres. Directly or indirectly, almost all proceed from him, first his mediocre pupils, Hippolyte

Flandrin, Jeanmot, the good Amaury-Duval, etc., and, at the other end of the movement, Anquetin, who promised so much, and Maurice Denis himself. Puvis de Chavannes, who first based his work on Delacroix, and then, very soon afterward, on Chassériau, certainly felt his influence, and also that of Corot. Mottez was a pupil of Ingres, and it was Ingres who had the younger man's fine portrait of a woman brought to Paris from the Villa Medici, where it was painted on a wall. Through this portrait, Mottez reintroduced into France the Italian fresco, which had been practically forgotten by the Italians themselves, and which, moreover, was perhaps but little suited to the climates of the north. Its resurrection is nevertheless a passionately interesting symptom of our return to architectural, impersonal, collective, and soon anonymous art. In our day, Paul Baudouin, who had not been able to convince his master, Puvis, has, one may say, theoretically and practically recreated fresco, after long years of ardent researches which were crowned by the resurrection, six or eight years ago, of the admirable book of Cennino Cennini. Following this, and sometimes with his advice Maurice Denis, René Piot, J. P. Lafitte (who afterward fell in the war), Dufrénoy, Alfred Lombard, Pierre Girieud, and Bourdelle have undertaken or finished great decorations in the Giottesque method. Once more, this is only a symptom, and perhaps destined to miscarry; but its significance is a moving one. It would be interesting to see what this admirable instrument would bring forth in the hands of decorators such as Bonnard or Vuillard, or Roussel, or Signac, or Valtat, or d'Espagnat, or Albert André, or Friesz, or Laprade, or Dufy, or Dufresne, or Lurçat, for whom, however, tapestry would seem better suited. Lurçat, moreover, has already made some impressive efforts in that direction.

(We may speak here only as a memory, of the innumerable official decorators from Louis Philippe to M. Poincaré. Their productions are no more concerned with painting than school books or works on archæology are with literature. Among them there are good illustrators of history, of whom the most honest appears to have been M. Jean Paul Laurens in France, the best documented being Menzel in Germany, the most picturesque, Verestchagin in Russia, and the most ingenious, Brangwyn in England. There are many illustrators, in painting and in sculpture, whom people take for painters and sculptors. It is a matter of definition. . . . The museum of Versailles is certainly worth a visit, and even several visits. . . . But that is upon condition that one goes there to seek not painting, but history, or rather historical anecdotes. The leading illustrator of history is Daniel Vierge, the Spaniard, who was sometimes incomparable in his fire, his horror, mystery, and evocative violence, and whose compositions have the advantage of not encumbering the walls. While English and American illustrators are so numerous and so intelligent, in France the illustrators have almost disappeared, since the delightful masters of the eighteenth century, Eisen, the Saint-Aubins, Moreau the younger, Gravelot, and Prud'hon. However, there were Raffet, sometimes Charlet and Tony Johannot, and the pompousness of Doré cannot make us forget the fantastic magic of some of his plates. The romanticist reign of history having come to an end, certain of our contemporaries have attempted to animate the margins of novels and of poems—Bonnard, who brings to the task his fanciful freedom and his insinuating poetry, Laprade, Maurice Denis, Louise Hervieu, Naudin, Segonzac, and the admirable Delaw, the entertainer of innocent little children and of cultivated grown persons. The resurrection of wood engraving tends, moreover, to renew illustration.)

(*c*) Italian *Futurism* is only a systematization of these tendencies, and an anti-plastic one, at that.

(*d*) *Cubism* is only an artificial stylization of form, basing itself on a wrong understanding of the saying of Cézanne to which I made allusion above, and which had no other pretension than that of symbolizing his thought. Independent of its pretensions to restore form in a block, in all its dimensions, and without taking account of the reflections, it is the extreme of synthesis following upon the extreme analysis of the Neo-Impressionists. Like all systems, it can afford discipline for the painters. Dunoyer de Segonzac, Ozenfant, Lhote, L. A. Moreau, de la Fresnaye, Boussingault, le Fauconnier, and Metzinger became painters by going through or by skirting Cubism. Braque, Léger, and Juan Gris remain painters in spite of it, and Picasso, who was a painter before founding it, becomes one again as he leaves it. And all, having come to it in order the better to obey Cézanne, will detach themselves from it, thanks to him.

(*e*) The art of the portrait has perhaps constituted the most permanent strength of the French School—and I say "School" for lack of a better word. This art has known scarcely any decline for seven centuries. All the Gothic image-makers were admirable observers of the human face. Through the sculptors of the tombs, they reach out their hand to the painters of the Renaissance, Froment d'Avignon, Foucquet, Jean Perréal, Malouel, the anonymous men of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Clouets, and Corneille de Lyon, so penetrating, so sober, so mischievously candid, pointed, and clear cut, like the intelligence which characterizes and dissects, without thought of the social station, of the function, and of the tastes of those whom it examines, and who do not yet think of striking attitudes before it. In the seventeenth century, when Lagneau and Demonstier introduced their science, the psychological power of the old French masters enters the architectural frame of method with Poussin, Claude Lefebvre, Sébastien Bourdon, Le Brun, and Coyzevox. Thenceforward, the portrait assumes a density and a mass which, together with the whole spirit of the time, constitute the imposing block of the classic period, in which the resemblance and the savor of the object are even more striking, for anyone who can appreciate them, than the majestic order of the language which describes it. Rigaud, Largillière, and the Coustous cause the structural science of the great century to pass insensibly into those astonishing effigies of conversationalists, of artists, of philosophers, of abbés of the bedroom and the court, of favorites, and of ladies of fashion, through which La Tour, Drouais, Perronneau, Houdon, Greuze, Pajou, and Liotard of Geneva smilingly place upon the slope of the abyss which is opening, an aristocracy fatigued by its excess of mind. David prevents the psychological acuteness of the artists from wrecking itself amid fashionable fluency, and at the threshold of the nineteenth century, powerfully re-establishes, through his innumerable pupils, the compromised solidity of the portrait. After that, Ingres will need only to confide to this framework the plenitude of his sensual vision in order to transmit to the naturalistic generation the tradition of the old Frenchmen.

The nineteenth century, like all the great epochs—and it is, beyond all doubt, the greatest epoch in our painting—saw in the portrait only one of the multiple aspects of the life to be expressed, and its masters, Delacroix, Rude, Millet, Courbet, and especially Corot and Carpeaux, have done no more therein than follow, with a grand ease, the practice of the heroes, Raphael, Titian, Tintoretto, Rubens, Rembrandt, Velasquez, and Goya. From the fact that there are few "portrait-painters," although Ingres is one above all else, although a lesser but honorable painter, Fantin-Latour, is scarcely anything else, although certain startling medallions are all that save from oblivion the name of David d'Angers, although Rodin wrested from matter the most profound accents of the human face, although Cézanne discovered the firmest planes of its structure, and Degas the sharpest lines of its intellectual construction, one must not conclude that the nineteenth century is poorer in portraits than another. It has too many, and they are too close as "likenesses," which means, perhaps, that they might be closer. They swarm, from the gracious effigies of Baron Gérard to the honest photographs of M. Bonnat, from Winterhalter's puppets all dressed up in new clothes to the few pictures of bourgeois elegance painted by M. Carolus-Duran in his youth, and from the faces of Prud'hon, emerging from amorous shadow, to those of Ricard, which are a little bit lost in it, and to those of Carrière, which sometimes accumulate too much of it in their hollows in order thereby to make the projections stand out. In our day, it is doubtless Vuillard who represents the psychological tradition of the French portrait with the finest mind, and Mahn who represents it most faithfully. Moreover, the portrait, like the other plastic expressions, is undergoing the influence of the impressionistic and musical current and that of the architectural comment which, together, are destined to give to our epoch the accent which it will have for the future: Bonnard, like Vuillard, causes to circle around it his fugitive colorations, the shadows, the shadings, the reflections, and the murmurs; Vallotton works at it like a mason, with a morose obstinacy; Matisse brings it back, in its essentials, to decorative lines and tones; and Charles Pequin constructs it, like his landscapes and his still-lifes, with the purities and the sonorities of the violoncello, and with a feeling for the definitive significance of the face that is before him.

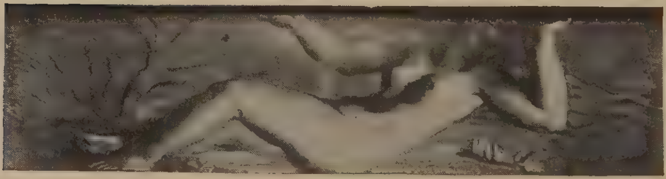
Outside of France, it appears to be especially in the art of the portrait that the English and the Americans have expended their superficial skill, with broad and creamy tones, in big, liquid brush-strokes, falsely robust and frank, of which Sargent is past master and which Whistler rebukes—happily for his memory—by causing to hover about his mysterious effigies the vague music of the half-tints and of the subtle arrangements of rare notes and shaded passages. The close resemblance of the faces, at once hollow and massive, of the Prussian Lenbach does not succeed in hiding his constant and meticulous padding out of his ostensible power. Zuloaga and La Gandara, the Spaniards, and Boldini, the Italian, vocalize and guitarrize—with their strength composed of theatrical make-up or with their grimacing impotence, and produce a fashionable art, which will leave strange psychological documents, less related to its models than to its authors. Evenepoel, the Belgian, who died too young, would doubtless have lived up to his promise. But we must wait for the profound effect of French painting in the nineteenth century, and of Cézanne and Renoir above all, on men of a strong and sincere nature. It is already manifest and salutary, as regards the art of the portrait, in the case of certain foreign artists among whom Rivera, the Mexican, seems to me the most interesting, at once because of his preoccupation with the architectural understructure and the turning volumes, wherein the double influence of the two French masters persists, and because of something unexpected, surprised, and phantomlike which makes clear his Spanish antecedents, manifested under the auspices of Goya and of Zurbarán.

(*f*) I fear that the multiplication of talents which we are witnessing to-day marks the end of the great French school of the nineteenth century. Painting and sculpture, moreover, are perhaps condemned to disappear in their present form and destination. The complexity of the soul and of the means of man increases from day to day. Who can foresee the destiny of an instrument like the cinematograph, for example? As symphonic painting succeeded melodic painting in flat tones, one may form an idea of a kind of cinematographic symphony succeeding the immobile symphony realized by the Venetians, the Hollanders, the Spaniards, and the French. Can one imagine the power of lyric exaltation which might be given to the mind by a succession of colored images painted by a Michael Angelo, or a Tintoretto, or a Rubens, or a Rembrandt, or a Goya, or a Delacroix, and precipitated into the drama of movement and of time by a registering apparatus?

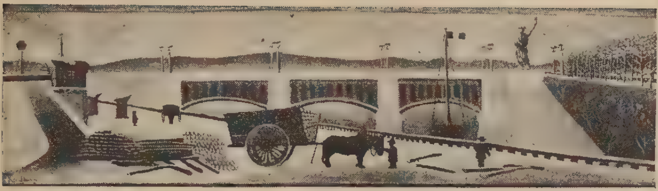
(*g*) One of the most impressive testimonies to the disquietude of the artists, and to their need for drawing together and for understanding, is their disposition to write on their art and on the permanent or present tendencies of their art. This is common to all the artists of periods when systems change decisively—to the Italian universalists, the French, English, and German artists of the end of the eighteenth century, and to the passage from romanticism and materialism to the orientations of to-day. From Delacroix himself, and from Fromentin—even from Courbet!—to

Rodin, to Carrière, and to Redon, there are few who have not yielded to the need to expound their intentions or those of the others. Mention must be made, in our day, of Louise Hervieu, Maurice Denis, Emile Bernard, Bourdelle, Matisse, Signac, d'Espagnat, Albert André, Ozenfant, Jeanneret, Gleizes, Metzinger, Bissière, Lhote, and especially J. E. Blanche, as writers on art of great distinction.

(*h*) Notably the elements of the perpendicular style, borrowed in greater part from the palaces of the Achemenides and from the Gothic style of southern France, the Palace of the Popes at Avignon, for example.



Chassériau.



Henri Rousseau. The Bridge (*Private collection*).

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I have finished the History of Art, which is the history of man; I have listened with gratitude to all the voices which, for ten thousand years, man has used in order to speak to me. If the echo of those voices is sometimes heard in these pages, it is because I have loved him as he is and also as he desires to be. I shall die. Men live. I believe in them. Their adventure will come to an end only with the adventure of the earth, and, when the earth is dead, it will perphaps continue elsewhere. It is only a moment of it that I have recounted in this book. But every living moment contains the whole of life. Whoever participates with confidence in the adventure of men has his portion of immortality.

SYNOPTIC TABLES

Signs and abbreviations employed in the synoptic tables

A.	Arabic art
B	Byzantine art
Bl.	Bolognese art
F.	Florentine art
M.	Mussulman art
N.	Neapolitan art
P.	Persian art
Pl.	Portuguese art
R.	Russian art
Rm.	Roman art
S.	Scandinavian art
V.	Venetian art
T.	Turkish art
a.	architect
c.	ceramist
m.	musician
s.	sculptor
p.	painter
cr.	critic
e.	engraver

The names of the painters, sculptors, architects and other artists are in italics. The names of the principal masters are in heavy print.

A

Dates	India
17th century, 1st half	M. Mausoleum of Akbar at Secundra (1613)
	M. Mausoleum of Ibrahim Roza at Bijapur (1620)
	M. Mausoleum of Etmadowla at Lahore (1622)
	M. Mausoleum of Jehangir at Lahore (1627)
	M. Palace of Delhi (1628–38)
	Austin de Bordeaux and *Verroneo*, decorators
	M. The Taj-Mahal of Agra (1630–47)
	M. Mosque of Vizir-Khan at Lahore (1634)
	Indo-Thibetan temple of Bhatgaori
	M. Mausoleum of Mahmoud at Bijapur
	Indo-Thibetan stupa of Sambunath (?)
	M. Great Mosque of Delhi (1644–58)
	M. Pearl Mosque at Agra (1648)
	Pagoda and palace of Madura (1650)

A

DATES	CHINA	JAPAN
17th century, 1st half		*Kano Sanroku*, p.
		Deme-Jioman, s. of masks
		Kiyomasa, a. of the Nagoya castle (1610)
		Koetsu, lacquerer (1557–1637)
		Shiokuado (1583–1639), p.
		Niten Miyamoto (?–1645), p.
		Umetada, carver
	Temple of Hiao t'angchou (1635)	*Ionasa Matahei*, p.
	Tcheng Hong-Tcheou, p. (1599–1652)	
		Kano Naonobu (1607–51), p.
		Ninsei (?–1660), ceramist
		Hidari Zingoro (1594–?), s. and a. of the temples of Nikko and Tohioin
	Tsing painters	*Kano Tanyu* (1601–74), p.

BYZANTIUM, ISLAM, RUSSIA	FRANCE
P. Meïdan I., Chalis of Ispahan	Place Royale in Paris (1604)
	Salomon Debrosse (?–1627), a.
T. Ahmedié Mosque at Constantinople (1609)	Place ducale at Charleville
	Lagneau, draftsman
	Jean Boullongne (1591–1634), p. (lived in Italy)
	Jacques Callot (1593–1635), engraver
	Dumonstier (1574–1646), draftsman
A. Karaouyne Mosque at Fez (1623)	*Rubens* in France (1622)
	Guillaume Dupré (1574–1647), engraver of medals
	Simon Guillain (1581–1658), s.
A. *Mahammed-Ennigo*, a. of the Hamouda-Pacha mosque at Tunis (1631)	*Simon Vouet* (1590–1649), p.
P. *Shoudja-ed-Daoulah*, p.	
	Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665), p. (lived in Italy)
P. Mosque of Sheik Sefi at Ardebil (1642)	*François Mansard* (1598–1662), p.
	Eustache Le Sueur (1617–55), p.
B. Monasteries and frescoes of Mount Athos	Academy of Painting and Sculpture (1648)
	Le Vau (1612–70), a.

A

Dates	Italy	England
	Crist. Allori (1577–1621), p. F.	
	Guido Reni (1575–1642), p. Bl.	
	Pietro Tacca (1580–1640), s. F.	
	Domenichino (1581–1641), p. Bl.	
	Monteverde (1568–1649), m.	
		Inigo Jones (1579–1631), a. of the banquet hall at Whitehall
		Rubens in England (1628)
		Van Dyck in England (1632)
	Albani (1578–1660), p. Bl.	
17th century, 1st half	*Frescobaldi* (1585–1655), m. of Ferrara	
	Algardi (1592–1654), a. Bl.	
	Guercino (1591–1656), p. Bl.	
	Villa Doria-Pamphili at Rome	
	P. da Cortona (1596–1669), p. F.	
	Velasquez in Italy (1648)	
	Roman villas	
	Palace of the Isola Bella (1650)	

GERMANY AND SCANDINAVIA	FLANDERS AND BELGIUM
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	Otto Voenius (1558–1629), p.
	Pourbus (1569–1622), p.
	Velvet Breughel (1565–1625), p.
E. Holl (1573–1646), a. of the City Hall of Augsburg (1615–70)	*Adam van Noort* (1557–1641), p.
	Hell Brughel (1564–1638), p.
	Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), p.
	Rombouts (1597–1637), p.
	D. Teniers the Elder (1582–1649), p.
	Van Dyck (1599–1641), p.
	Corn. de Vos (1585–1651), p.
	Duquesnoy (1594–1646), p.
	Snyders (1579–1657), p.
	Brouwer (1605–38), p.
	Jan Fyt (1611–45), p.
	G. de Crayer (1584–1669), p.
	Snayers (1592–1667), p.
	David Ryckaert (1612–61), p.
	Jacob van Oost (1600–71), p.
Heinrich Schütz (1595–1672), m.	
	Jordaens (1593–1678), p.

A

DATES	HOLLAND
17th century, 1st half	*Lieven de Key* (1560–1627), a. of the Vleeschhall of Haarlem (1602–1603)
	Karel van Mander publishes the "Life of the Painters of the Netherlands" (1604)
	C. Cornelissen (1562–1638), p.
	Moreelse (1571–1638), p.
	Mierevelt (1567–1641), p. *Lastmann* (1583–1633), p.
	Ravenstein (1572–1657), p.
	Nicolas Elias (1590–1655), p.
	Honthorst (1590–1656), p.
	Van Goyen (1596–1656), p.
	Frans Hals (1580–1666), p.
	Verspronck (1597–1662), p.
	Salomon de Koninck (1609–56)
	Jan Asselyn (1610–52), p.
	Th. de Keizer (1596–1667), p.
	Govert Flinck (1615–60), p.
	Salomon Ruysdael (1600–70)
	Weenix (1621–60), p.
	Delft factories
	Brekelenkam (?–1668), p.
	Van der Helst (1612–70), p.
	Rembrandt van Ryn (1606–69), p.
	Karel Fabritius (1620–54), p.
	J. van Loo (1614–70), p.
	Paul Potter (1625–54), p.
	Van der Neer (1603–77), p.
	J. van Kampen, a. of the City Hall of Amsterdam (1648–55)
	C. van Everdingen (1606–79), p.
	Santvoort (1610–80), p.

SPAIN AND PORTUGAL	HISTORY
Ribalta (1550–1628), p.	Unity of Great Britain (1603)
Las Roelas (1558–1625), p.	*Abbas the Great*, Shah of Persia (1585–1628)
Juan Gomez de Mora, a. of the Plaza Mayor, Madrid	*Francis Bacon* (1561–1628)
	Lippershey invents the microscope (1608)
	Expulsion of the Moors from Spain—Independence of Holland (1609)
	The *Fujiwaras* in Japan—*Ieyasu* (1603–16)
	Kepler (1571–1630)
Las Cuevas (1568–1635), p.	*Vanini* (1585–1619)
	Galileo (1564–1641)
Greg. Fernandez (1566–1636), s.	Beginning of the Thirty Years' War, (1618–48)
Carducho (1578–1638), p.	*Wallenstein* (1583–1634)
Pedro Orrente (1570–1644), p.	*Richelieu* (1585–1642)
	Harvey (1578–1658) discovers the circulation of the blood (1628)
J. B. de Mayno (1569–1649), p.	*Gustavus Adolphus* defeats the Empire at Leipzig (1631)
	Descartes (1596–1650)
Tristan (1586–1640), p.	
Martinez Montañés (?–1649), s.	
Pacheco (1571–1654), p. and cr.	
Herrera the Elder (1576–1656), p.	*Hobbes* (1588–1679)
Ribera (1588–1656), p. (lived in Italy)	The Shogun *Yemitsu* (1624–51) closes Japan (1639)
	Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658), Revolution in England (1642–50)
	France defeats Spain at Rocroi (1643)
	China conquered by the Manchus (1644) *Tsing* Dynasty
Rubens in Spain (1636)	
Velasquez (1599–1660), p.	
Zurbarán (1598–1662), p.	
	Blaise Pascal (1623–62)
Alonso Cano (1601–67), p. and s.	
Leonardo (1616–50), s.	
Juan Rizi (1597–1675), p.	

B

DATES	INDIA
	Indo-Thibetan temples of Pashpatti (?)
17th century, 2d half	M. Mosque of Aureng-Zeb at Lahore (1674)
	Palace of Bhatgaori in Nepal
	Indo-Thibetan monuments of Sambunath in Nepal

China	Japan
Tshing painters	
	Kano Yeishin (?–1685), p.
	Tosa Mitsuoki (1616–91), p.
Yun Cheou-p'ing (1633–90), p.	*Tohaku*, p. (School of Hasagawa)
T s'ang Ying-hiuan, director of the Imperial Manufactories (1683)	
	Kano Tsunenobu (1635–1713), p.
	Moronobu (1638–1711), p.
Lamaist temple of Jehol	
	Korin (1660–1716), p. and lacquerer
	Itshio (1651–1724), p.

Dates	Byzantium, Islam, Russia	France
17th century, 2d half	T. Yeni-Validé mosque at Constantinople (1651) (*Khodja-Kassin*), a.	The Brothers **Le Nain**, pp.
		Abraham Bosse (1602–76), c.
		Sébastien Bourdon (1616–71), p.
		Jean Warin (1604–72), engraver of medals
		Claude Lorrain (1600–82), p. (lived in Italy)
		F. Blondel (1617–86), a.
		Courtois le Bourguignon (1621–76), p.
		Robert Nanteuil (1623–78), d.
		Claude Perrault (1613–88), a.
		Manufact. of the Gobelins (1661)
		Palace of Versailles
		Michel Anguier (1612–86), s.
	P. Chïraz bridge at Ispahan (1666)	*Colbert*, superintendent of the Beaux-Arts (1664)
		Cambert (1628–77), m.
	Jean Chardin (1643–1713), Frenchman visits Persia (1665–77)	Academy of Rome (1666)
		Observatory of Paris (1667)
		Claude Lefebvre (1632–75), p.
		Le Brun (1619–90), p.
		Lehongre (1628–90), s.
		Academy of Architecture (1671)
	P. Ceramics, jewels, rugs	*Mignard* (1612–95), p.
		Lulli (1633–87), m.
		Libéral Bruant (1637–94), a. of the Hotel des Inv. (1675–1707)
		Pierre Puget (1622-94), s.
	A. Rebuilding of the Kasba of Mecca (1581)	**Le Nôtre** (1613–1709), gardener
		Hôtels and châteaux in Paris and the provinces
		Les Keller (1635–1702), founder
		Charpentier (1634–1702), m.
		Vauban (1637-1707), military a.
		Gérard Audran (1640–1703), e.
		Parrocel (1648–1704), p.
		Pont-Royal, Paris (1685–89)
		Edelinck (1640–1707), e.
	P. Medressé of Hussein at Ispahan (1593)	*Legros* (1629–1714), s.
		Noël Coypel (1628–1707), p.
		Girardon (1628–1715), s.
		Jouvenet (1644–1717), p.
		Coyzevox (1640–1720), s.
	P. Palace of Tchechel-Soutom at Ispahan (1700)	**J. Hardouin-Mansard** (1646–1708), a. of the Place Vendôme, etc.

ITALY	ENGLAND
Roman villas	
Carissimi (1604–74), m.	
Longhena (1604–75), a. V.	
Bernini (1598–1680), s. Rm.	
Salvator Rosa (1615–73), p. N.	
Sassoferrato (1605–85), p. Rm.	
	Peter Lely (1618–80), p.
Stradella (1645–81), m.	
L. Giordano (1632–1705), p. N.	*Christopher Wren* (1632–1723), a. of Saint Paul's Cathedral (1675)
Carlo Maratta (1625–1713), p. Rm.	
Fort Palamède at Nauplie (Venetian) (1687)	
C. Fontana (1634–1714), a. Rm.	
Violin makers of Cremona	
The *Amatis* and *Stradivarius* (1644–1737)	*Henry Purcell* (1658–95), m.
	Chatsworth Castle (1687–1706)
Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713), m.	

B

Dates	Germany and Scandinavia	Flanders and Belgium
17th century, 2d half		*Quellin the Elder* (1609–68), p.
		Philippe de Champagne (1602–74), p. (lived in France)
		D. Teniers the Younger (1610–90), p.
		Van der Meulen (1632–90), p.
	Academy of Berlin (1694)	
	Academy of Dresden (1697)	
	Schlüter (1664–1714), a. and s.	

HOLLAND	SPAIN AND PORTUGAL
Wouwerman (1619–68), p.	*J. B. del Mazo* (?–1667), p.
Gerard Dou (1613–75), p.	
Van Eeckhout (1621–74), p.	
Pynacker (1622–73), p.	
Al. van Everdingen (1621–75), p.	
Karel Dujardin (1622–78), p.	
Van der Velde the Elder, p. (1611–93)	
Metsu (1630–67), p.	
Ferdinand Bol (1616–80), p.	*Francisco Rizi* (1607–85), p.
Van Ostade (1610–85), p.	
Pieter de Hooch (1630–77), p.	
Terborg (1617–81), p.	
Berchem (1620–83), p.	*Carreño de Miranda* (1614–85), p.
Vermeer of Delft (1632–75), p.	
Tilborgh (1625–78), p.	*Murillo* (1618–82), p.
Jan Steen (1626–79), p.	
Van Hoogstraten (1626–78), p.	
Wynants (1625–82), p.	
Jacob Ruysdael (1628–82), p.	
Van Mieris (1635–81), p.	*Pedro de Mena* (?–1693)
Albert Cuyp (1620–91), p.	
Van der Meer (1628–91), p.	*Claudio Coello* (?–1693), p.
Nicolas Maes (1632–93), p.	Valdés Leal (1630–91), p.
Hondecoeter (1636–95), p.	
Jan de Bray (?–1697), p.	
Gerit Berck-Heyde (1638–98), p.	
Van der Velde the Younger (1633–1707) p.	Sebastián Muñoz (1654–90), p.
Hobbema (1638–1709), p.	
Van der Heyde (1637–1712), p.	

B

Dates	History
17th century, 2d half	*Milton* (1608–74)
	Ruyter (1607–76)
	Turenne (1611–75)
	Corneille (1606–84)
	Calderón (1600–81)
	Molière (1622–73)
	Spinoza (1632–77)
	Swammerdam (1637–80)
	Sténon (1631–87) founds geology
	La Fontaine (1621–95)
	War of France and Holland (1672)
	Louis XIV (1642–1715)
	Racine (1639–99)
	Locke (1632–1704)
	Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685)
	Newton (1642–1727), The Gravitation of the Universe (1686)
	Morosini bombards the Acropolis, 1687
	Pierre Bayle (1647–1706)
	Leuwenhoeck (1632–1723)
	Leibnitz (1646–1716)
	William of Orange (1689–1702)
	Genroku epoch in Japan (1688–1704)
	Peter the Great (1672–1725)
	Kingdom of Prussia (1700)

DATES	INDIA	CHINA
18th century, 1st half	Pagodas of Siringam at Trichinopoly	
		Houang-chen, p.
		Ko-ming-Siang, potter
	Indo-Thibetan temples of Nepal	Temple of Heaven, Pekin
	Industrial art	*Tshing* painters

Dates	Japan	Byzantium, Islam, Russia
18th century, 1st half	*Shunyei* (1762–1819), e.	
	Tivaigetsudo, e.	
	Kaigetsudo, p. and e.	
	Torii Kiyonobu (1667–1729) invents engraving in colors	
	Sonin (1669–1733), carver	
		B. *Panagiotis Doxaras* (1662–?), p.
	Kenzan (1663–1743), c.	
		B. *Denys de Fourna* writes the "Guide to Painting" (?)
	Morikuni (1670–1749), e.	
	Sukenobu (1674–1754), e.	
	Ritsuo, lacquerer	
	Kiyomasu (1679–1763), e.	
	Okumura Masanobu (1685–1764), e.	
	Shigenaga (1697–1756), e.	
	Tosa Mitsuyoshi (1699–1772), e.	T. Nour. I. Osmanié mosque in Constantinople (1648)
	Harunobu (1718–70), e.	

FRANCE	ITALY
Antoine Coypel (1661–1722), p.	
Boulle (1642–1732), ebonist	
Lalande (1657–1726), m.	*Al. Scarlatti* (1659–1725), m.
Hôtel de Soubise, Paris (1706–12)	
J. B. Moreau (1656–1733), m.	
Couperin (1668–1733), m.	
Largillière (1656–1746), p.	
H. Rigaud (1659–1743), p.	
Antoine Watteau (1684–1721), p.	
Desportes (1661–1743), p.	
Dandrieu (1684–1740), m.	*Juvara* (1685–1735), a.
Clerembault (1676–1749), m.	
Lemoyne (1688–1737), p.	
G. Coustou (1677–1746), s.	*Marcello* (1686–1739), m.
J. B. Vanloo (1684–1745), p.	
Pater (1695–1736), p.	
Lancret (1690–1743), p.	*Pergolese* (1710–36), m.
Oudry (1686–1755), p. and e.	
J. Gabriel (1667–1742), a. draws the plan of Bordeaux (1730)	*Rosalba Carriera* (1675–1757), pastellist
Leblond (1667–1746) invents engraving in colors (1734)	*Piazzetta* (1682–1754), p. V.
J. Ph. Rameau (1683–1764), m.	*Dom. Scarlatti* (1685–1757), m.
Nattier (1685–1766), p.	Fountain of Trevi, Rome (1735–1762)
Count de Caylus (1692–1745), cr.	
Bouchardon (1698–1762), s.	
Ch. A. Coypel (1694–1752), p.	*Servandoni* (1695–1766), a. (lived in France)
The Brothers Adam (1700–59 and 1705–78), s.s.	*Panini* (1695–1768), p. Rm.
	Canaletto (1697–1768), p. V.
	Tiepolo (1696–1770), p. V.
Carle Vanloo (1705–65), p.	*Pietro Longhi* (1702–62), p. V.
F. Boucher (1703–70), p., decorator	
Manufactory of Sèvres (1748)	
Private Hôtels (Paris and provinces)	
J. F. Blondel (1705–74), a.	

C

Dates	England	Germany and Scandinavia
18th century, 1st half		Dresden china ware (1609)
	James Thornhill (1676–1734), p.	
		Kupetsky (1667–1740), Tchech p.
		Reinhard Keiser (1673–1739), m.
	William Kent (1685–1748), a. and p. creates the English garden	
		Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), m.
		Händel (1685–1759), m., lived in England
	William Hogarth (1697–1764), p., etc.	
		Castle of Schönbrunn (1744–50)

Flanders and Belgium	Holland
	J. van Huysum (1682–1749), p.

C

DATES	SPAIN AND PORTUGAL	HISTORY
18th century, 1st half		War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14)
		Daniel DeFoe (1663–1731)
		Jonathan Swift (1667–1745)
	Teodoro Ardemans, a. of the palace of la Granja (1721)	
		Vico (1688–1744)
		Saint-Simon (1675–1755)
	Plaza Mayor of Salamanca (1729–33)	
		Montesquieu (1689–1755)
	Francisco Zarcillo (1707–48), s.	War of the Polish Succession (1733–35)
		War of the Austrian Succession (1741–48)
		The *Encyclopédie* (1746)
		Voltaire (1696–1778)

D

Dates	India	China
18th century, 2d half	Temple of Dourga, Benarès	
		Bridge of the Summer Palace (1755)
	Gaur Monuments (?)	
		Hall of the Classics at Pekin
		Stupa of Pai t'a at Sseu
	Palace of Tanjore	
	Temple of Vishnu at Gaya	

D

Dates	Japan	Byzantium, Islam, Russia
18th century, 2d half	*Toyonobu* (1711–85), e.	P. Chiraz Monuments
	Ito Jakuchiu (1705–1800), e.	
	Koriusai (?–1781), e.	
	Kiyomitsu (1735–85), e.	
	Shuncho (1726–92), p.	
	Buntshio (?–1796), e.	
	Okio (1732–95), p.	P. Ceramics, jewelry, rugs
	Miva, s. of netsukes	
	Toyoharu (1733–1814), e.	
	Goshin (1741–1811), p.	
	Kano Yosen (1752–1809), p.	
	Shigemasa (1739–1819), e.	
	Kiyonaga (1742–1815), e.	P. Palace of Hecht-Behicht at Ispahan (1791)
	Yeishi, e.	
	Utamaro (1753–1806), p. and e.	
	Shiba Kokan (1747–1818), e.	
	Sharaku, e.	
	Ippo, p.	
	Sosen (1747–1821), p. and e.	

FRANCE	ITALY
Héré, a. of the Place Stanislas, Nancy (1752)	
The Ecole Militaire (1752)	
Chateau of Compiègne (1753–88)	
Tourny (1690–1760) transforms Bordeaux	Discovery of the ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii (1755)
J. S. Chardin (1699–1779), p.	
Baudouin (1723–69), e.	
Ollivier (1712–84), p.	
J. E. Liotard (1702–90), Swiss p.	*Piranesi* (1720–78), e.
Eisen (1720–78), e.	
Soufflot (1713–80), a.	Villa Albani, Rome (1760)
Drouais (1727–75), p.	*Zuccarelli* (1702–88), p.
Quentin de la Tour (1704–88), p.	
Pigalle (1714–85), s.	*B. Belotto* (2d Canaletto) (1724–80), p. V.
Perronneau (1715–83), p.	
G. de Saint-Aubin (1724–80), draftsman	
Joseph Vernet (1714–89), p.	
Cochin (1715–90), e. and cr.	**Guardi** (1712–93), p. V.
Falconet (1716–91), s. and cr.	
Le Prince (1733–81), e.	*Sacchini* (1734–86), m.
Gabriel (1710–82), a. of the palaces of the Place Louis XV (1762–70) and Petit Trianon (1771), etc.	
City Hall of Bordeaux (1771–81)	
Louis (1731–1802), a. of the Grand Théâtre of Bordeaux (1773–80)	*Piccini* (1728–1800), m.
Lépicié (1735–84), p. and e.	
J. F. Caffieri (1725–92), s.	
Vien (1716–1809), p.	
Greuze (1725–1803), p.	
Fragonard (1732–1806), p.	
A. de Saint-Aubin (1736–1807), e.	*Boccherini* (1740–1806), m.
Hubert Robert (1733–1808), p.	*Cimarosa* (1749–1801), m.
Reisener (1735–1806), ebonist	
Pajou (1730–1809), s.	
L. Gabriel Moreau (1740–1806), p.	
Clodion (1738–1814), s.	
Moreau the Younger (1741–1814), draftsman	
Chinard (1756–1813), s.	
Académie des Beaux-Arts (1795)	
Méhul (1763–1817), m.	*Visconti* (1751–1818), archæologist
Houdon (1741–1828), s.	
Louis David (1748–1825), p.	*Canova* (1757–1822), s.

D

Dates	England	Germany and Scandinavia
		Potsdam Castle (1753–69)
		Johannisburg Castle (1757–59)
	Allan Ramsay (1713–84), p.	
	R. Wilson (1714–82), p.	**Gluck** (1714–87), m. (lived in France)
		Raphael Mengs (1728–79), p. and cr. (lived in Spain)
	Gainsborough (1727–88), p.	*Winckelmann* (1717–88), publishes the History of Art (1764)
	The Royal Academy (1768)	
	Joshua Reynolds (1723–92), p. and cr.	
18th century, 2d half		*S. Lavreince* (1717–1807), e. (lived in France)
		Chodowieczki (1726–1801), e.
	Romney (1734–1802), p.	
		Mozart (1756–91), m.
		Haydn (1732–1809), m.
		Angelica Kauffmann (1741–1807), Swiss p.
	George Morland (1760–1804), p.	
		Langhaus (1733–1808), a.
	J. R. Smith (1752–1812), e.	
	Opie (1761–1807), p.	
	Hoppner (1759–1810), p.	
	Raeburn (1756–1823), p.	

BELGIUM	**HOLLAND**
Grétry (1741–1813), m. (lived in France)	
Gossec (1733–1829), m. (lived in France)	

Dates	Spain and Portugal	History
18th century, 2d half		*Linnæus* (1707–78)
		J. J. Rousseau (1712–78)
		Euler (1707–83)
		Diderot (1712–84)
		Cook (1728–79)
		France cedes her colonies to England (1763)
		Maria Theresa (1740–80)
		Buffon (1717–88)
		Frederick the Great (1740–86)
		Spallanzani (1729–99)
		Division of Poland (1772)
		C. F. Wolff (1733–94) founds embryology
		Beccaria (1738–94)
		Immanuel Kant (1724–1805)
		Lavoisier (1743–94) founds chemistry
		Catherine of Russia (1762–96)
		Washington (1732–99), Independence of America (1783)
		Montgolfier invents the balloon (1783)
		Alfieri (1749–1803)
		Schiller (1759–1805)
		French Revolution (1789)
		Danton (1759–1794)
		Robespierre (1758–1795)
		James Watt (1736–1819)
		Lazare Hoche (1768–97)
		Nelson (1758–1805)
	Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828), p. and e.	*Herschell* (1738–1822)
		Italian Campaign (1796–97)
		The French in Egypt (1798)
		Bichat (1771–1802) founds gen. anatomy
		Volta discovers the electric battery (1800)

DATES	INDIA	CHINA
	M. Mausoleum of Runjet-Singh at Lahore	
19th century, 1st half		
	M. Mausoleum of Pertap-Singh at Khajurao	

E

DATES	JAPAN	ISLAM AND RUSSIA
19th century, 1st half	*Keisai Kitao* (?–1824), e.	
	Masayoshi (1761–1824), e.	
	Toyokuni (1769–1825), e.	
	Hohitsu (1761–1828), e.	P. Palace of Ser-Pouch. I Deh at Ispahan (1808)
	Toyohino (1773–1828), e.	
	Seinin, bronze worker	
	Tani Buntcho (1764–1842), e.	
	Hokusai (1760–1849), p. and e.	
	Hokkei (1780–?), e.	
	Kuniyoshi (1797–1842), e.	
	Keisai Yeisen (1790–1848), e.	
	Hiroshige (1797–1858), e.	
		R. *Glinka* (1804–57), m.
	Kunisada (1786–1865), e.	
	Yosai (1787–1878), e.	
	Industrial art	R. *Dargomijski* (1813–69)

FRANCE	ITALY
Prud'hon (1758–1823), p.	
Debucourt (1755–1832), e.	
Arch of Triumph of the Etoile (1806–36)	
Thomire (1751–1843), bronze worker	
Le Sueur (1760–1837), m.	
Mme. Vigée-Lebrun (1755–1842), p.	
Gros (1771–1835), p.	*Cherubini* (1760–1842), m. (lived in France)
Gérard (1770–1837), p.	
Boilly (1761–1845), p. and e.	
Michel (1763–1843), p.	
Géricault (1791–1824), p.	
Percier (1764–1839) and *Fontaine* (1762–1853), a.a.	
Champollion reads the hieroglyphics (1822)	
Works of *Chevreul* on colors (1823)	
J. R. Isabey (1767–1855), p. and e.	
J. R. Auguste (1789–1850), pastellist	
Rude (1784–1855), s.	
Pradier (1792–1852), s.	*Spontini* (1778–1851), m. (lived in France)
David d'Angers (1788–1856), s.	
Charlet (1792–1845), p. and e.	*Bellini* (1802–35), m.
D. Ingres (1780–1867), p. and draftsman	
Raffet (1804–60), e.	*Donizetti* (1798–1848), m.
Decamps (1803–60), p. and e.	
Chopin (1810–49), m.	
Paul Huet (1803–69), p.	
Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863), p	
Hector Berlioz (1803–69), m.	
Chassériau (1819–56), p.	
Aqueduct of Roquefavour (1842–47)	*Rossini* (1792–1868), m. (lived in France)
Labrouste (1801–75), a. of the Biblio. Ste. Geneviève (1843–50)	
Barye (1796–1875), s.	
Corot (1796–1875), p.	*Calamatta* (1801–69), e.
Th. Rousseau (1812–67), p.	
Chintreuil (1816–73), p.	
Préault (1809–79), s.	
Ricard (1823–72), s.	

E

Dates	England and America	Germany and Scandinavia
19th century, 1st half	*Flaxman* (1755–1828), s.	
	Rowlandson (1756–1827), draftsman	
	Old Crome (1769–1821), p.	
	Lawrence (1769–1830), p.	**L. van Beethoven** (1770–1827), m.
		Senefelder (1771–1834) invents lithography
	Constable (1776–1837), p.	School of Nazareans
	Wilkie (1785–1841), p.	
	Cotman (1782–1842), p.	*Schadow* (1764–1850), s.
		Weber (1786–1826), m.
		Schinkel (1781–1841), a.
	Turner (1775–1851), p.	
	Bonington (1801–28), p. (lived in France)	*S. Thorwaldsen* (1779–1844), Danish s.
	P. de Wint (1784–1849), p.	*Schubert* (1797–1828), m.
		Ottfried Müller (1797–1840) publishes the "Manual of Archæology" (1830)
		Rauch (1777–1857), s.
		Mendelssohn (1809–47), m
	Westminster Palace (1840)	**Schumann** (1810–56), m.
	Cruikshank (1792–1878), draftsman	Munich School

BELGIUM	**HOLLAND**
Navez (1787–1859), p.	

Dates	Spain and Portugal	History
19th century, 1st half		*Napoleon* (1769–1821)
		Fulton invents the steamboat (1803)
		Laplace (1749–1827)
		Expansion of the French Revolution (1796–1812)
		Goethe (1749–1832)
		Lamarck (1744–1829), Transformism (1809)
		Byron (1788–1824)
		Hegel (1770–1831)
		Stephenson invents the locomotive (1814)
		Waterloo (1815)
		Shelley (1792–1822)
		Emancipation of the Spanish Colonies (1808–28)
		Laënnec (1781–1826)
		Sadi Carnot (1796–1832)
		Freeing of Greece (1821–29)
		Stendhal (1783–1842)
		A. von Humboldt (1769–1859)
		Gauss (1777–1855)
		Baer discovers the egg of mammals (1827)
		Niepce and *Daguerre* invent photography (1829)
		Honoré de Balzac (1799–1850)
		Schopenhauer (1788–1860)
		Auguste Comte (1798–1857)
		Schleiden and *Schwann* discover the cell (1838)
	Pl. Castle of Pena (1840–50)	*Morse* invents the telegraph (1843)
		Abraham Lincoln (1809–65)
		French, German, Hungarian revolutions (1848)
		Michelet (1798–1874)

F

DATES	INDIA	CHINA
19th century, 2d half	Industrial art	Industrial art

Dates	Japan	Islam and Russia
19th century, 2d half		*Smetana* (1824–84), Tchech m.
		R. **Moussorgsky** (1839–81), m.
		R. *Borodine* (1834–87), m.
	Kiosai (1831–91), e.	
		Dvorak (1841–1904), Tchech m.
		R. *Verestchagin* (1842–1904), p.
	Europeanized school	
		R. *Balakirew* (1837–1910), m.
		R. Rimsky-Korsakoff (1844–1908), m.

France	Italy
J. F. Millet (1814–75), p. and draftsman	
Honoré Daumier (1808–79), p. and e.	
Th. Couture (1815–79), p.	
Th. Silvestre (1823–76) publishes "Les Artistes Français" (1855)	
Viollet-le-Duc (1814–79), a.	
Daubigny (1817–78), p.	
Gustave Coubert (1819–77), p.	
Carpeaux (1827–75), s.	
Eugène Lami (1800–90), p.	
G. Bizet (1838–75), m.	
V. Mottez (1809–97), p.	
Monticelli (1824–86), p.	
G. Régamey (1837–75), p.	
Gustave Doré (1833–83), draftsman	
Edouard Manet (1832–83), p.	
César Franck (1822–90), m.	
Edouard Lalo (1823–92), m.	**G. Verdi** (1813–1901), m.
Eug. Boudin (1824–98), p.	
Puvis de Chavannes (1824–98), p.	
Gustave Moreau (1826–98), p.	*De Nittis* (1846–84), p. (lived in France)
Ch. Gounod (1818–93), m.	
F. Vernay (1822–95), p. and draftsman	
E. Fromentin (1820–76) publishes "Les Maîtres d'Autrefois" (1875)	
Sisley (1839–99), p.	
Camille Pissarro (1830–1903), p.	
Fantin-Latour (1836–1904), p.	
Paul Cézanne (1839–1906), p.	
Berthe Morizot (1841–95), p.	
Viaduct of Garabit (1881–84)	
Dalou (1838–1902), s.	
Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), p.	
Bracquemond (1833–1914), e.	
Eug. Carrière (1849–1906), p.	
Degas (1834–1917), p. and draftsman	
Massenet (1842–1912), m.	*Segantini* (1858–99), p.
Seurat (1859–91), p.	
Galerie des Machines (1889)	
Alph. Legros (1837), p. (lives in England)	*Boïto* (1842–1917), m.
Aug. Rodin (1840–1917), s.	*Maccari* (1840–1919), p.
Toulouse-Lautrec (1864–1901), p.	
Lepère (1843–1918), e.	
Massier (1844–1911), c.	
Odilon Redon (1840–1916), p.	
Claude Monet (1840), p.	
Renoir (1841–1919), p.	
Gabriel Fauré (1845), m.	*Medardo Rosso*, s.
Vincent d'Indy (1851), m.	
Cl. Debussy (1862–1918), m.	

F

DATES	ENGLAND AND AMERICA	GERMANY AND SCANDINAVIA
19th century, 2d half	*Joseph Paxton* (1803–65), a.	
	Alfred Stevens (1817–75), s.	
		G. Semper (1803–79), a.
		Richard Wagner (1813–83), m.
	(The Pre-Raphaelites)	*Fr. Liszt* (1811–86), Hungarian m.
	Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–82), p.	*J. Offenbach* (1819–80), m. (lived in France)
	John Ruskin (1819–1900), cr.	
	Watts (1818–1904), p.	
	Burne-Jones (1833–98), p.	*Schliemann* (1822–90), archæologist
	H. Hunt (1830–96), p.	Castles of *Ludwig II* of Bavaria
		Burckhardt (1818–97), Swiss cr.
	William Morris (1834–96), cr.	*Bruckner* (1824–96), m.
		Menzel (1815–1905), p.
		Marées (1837–87), p.
		Brahms (1833–97), m.
	J. M. N. Whistler (1834–1903), American (lived in France and England)	*Boecklin* (1827–1900), Swiss p.
		Lenbach (1836–1904), p.
	Kate Greenaway (1845–1901), draftsman	*Leibl* (1844–1900), p.
		F. Thaulow (1847–1906), Norwegian p.
		Grieg (1843–1907), Norwegian m.
	Walter Crane (1845), draftsman	*Hodler* (1853–1918), Swiss p.
	Mary Cassatt (1845), p., American (lives in France)	*Liebermann* (1847), p.

Belgium	Holland
Ch. de Groux (1825–70), p.	
	Constantin Guys (1805–92), draftsman (lived in France)
	Jongkind (1822–91), p. (lived in France)
Felicien Rops (1833–98), e.	
Alfred Stevens (1828–1906), p. (lived in France)	*Mesdag* (1831), p.
Constantin Meunier (1831–1905), s.	
Gevaert (1820–1908), m.	
	Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890), p. (lived in France)
Evenepoel (1872–99), p.	

DATES	SPAIN AND PORTUGAL	HISTORY
19th century, 2d half		Revolt of the Tai-Pings in China (1851)
		Carlyle (1795–1881)
		Emerson (1803–82)
		Ch. Dickens (1812–70)
		Claude Bernard (1813–78)
		Victor Hugo (1802–86)
		Sepoy Rebellion in India (1857)
		J. R. Mayer (1814–78); Riemann (1826-66)
		Garibaldi (1807–82), Italian Unity (1859-62)
		Dostoievski (1818–81)
		Gustave Flaubert (1821-80)
		Karl Marx (1813–83)
		Charles Baudelaire (1821–67)
		Maxwell (1831–79)
		Walt Whitman (1819–92)
		Bismarck (1815–98)
		Ernest Renan (1823–92)
	Fortuny (1838–74), p.	Japanese Revolution (1868)
		Suez Canal (1869)
		Franco-Prussian War. Unification of Germany
		The Italians in Rome (1870–71)
		Louis Pasteur (1822–95)
		H. Taine (1828–93)
		Mommsen (1817–1903)
		Herbert Spencer (1820–1904)
		Graham Bell invents the telephone (1876)
		Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906)
		Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900)
		Emile Zola (1840–1903)
	Daniel Vierge (1851–1904), draftsman (lived in France)	*Leo Tolstoy* (1828–1911)
		Ernst Haeckel (1831–1919)
	Albeniz (1861–1910), m.	*Em. Verhaeren* (1855–1916)
		Chinese-Japanese War (1894)
	Architecture of Barcelona (*Antonio Gaudi*, a.)	Spanish-American War (1898)
		Rebirth of the Olympic Games (1896)
		Roentgen discovers the X-rays
	Granados (✝ 1916), m.	The Dreyfus Affair (1898)
		The cinematograph
	Dario de Regoyos, p.	*Thomas Hardy* (1840)

HISTORY OF ART

THE SPIRIT OF THE FORMS

THE CAGE

ELIE FAURE
HISTORY OF ART

THE SPIRIT OF THE FORMS

I offer to my brother
JEAN LOUIS FAURE
this summary of thought which
owes to him the larger part
of its independence

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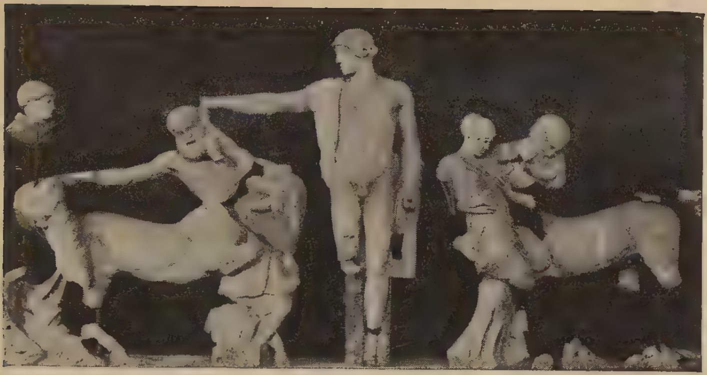

Fig. 1
Olympia

INTRODUCTION

MUST one rejoice in it? Must one regret it? We have reached a critical point in history when it becomes impossible for us to think profoundly—or to create, I imagine—if we isolate ourselves in the adventure of our race, if we refuse to demand a confirmation of our own presentiments from the expressions in words or in the arts that other races have given of themselves. I say "a confirmation," although at first it may be the contradictions, or at least the differences that strike us. In appearance an abyss lies between the Negro or Polynesian idol, for instance, and Greek sculpture at its apogee. Or between that idol and the great European painting of which the Venetian School has revealed to us the means and the possibilities. And yet, one of the miracles of this time is that an increasing number of spirits should become capable not only of tasting the delicate or violent savor of these reputedly contradictory works and finding them equally intoxicating; even more than that, they can grasp, in the seemingly opposed characters, the inner accords that lead us back to man and show him to us everywhere animated by analogous passions, as witnessed by all the idols, for all of them are marked by the accent of these passions.

I am not unaware of the danger of these statements. At certain epochs—the classical Greek or French epoch, for instance—it was good for the poet to be unaware that he represented only one aspect of the divine soul, and to direct all the diffused powers deposited in him by culture, his intuitions, and his needs toward a single, narrow, and very definite perfection; he could thus attain the expression of the pathetic moment in which his race was to enclose these powers within the frames of reason. But we are no longer at this point. Such an attitude to-day runs the risk of rendering impotent those who adopt it. For the present, at least, to limit one's effort to the historic ideal of a race, or of a people—an ideal that has been transposed, moreover, or displaced—to refuse to perceive the unique face of man under the masks that cover it, is no longer a sign of force but rather of senility.

Many times in history, toward the end of the Old World, for instance, or after the Christian efflorescence of the Occidental Middle Ages, the critical spirit has found itself in the presence of such an accumulation of the unknown, after having catalogued its prodigious attainments, that it has had to appeal to all the groups of men affected by the same problems, in order to seek the solution with them. In our days, however, it is no longer merely about the basin of the Eastern Mediterranean or in Western Europe that we must assemble the elements of a mysticism that is alone capable of putting an end, at least for the present, to the kind of enervating disorder that transports us. The critical spirit has become a universal poet. It is necessary to enlarge inordinately, and unceasingly, the circle of its horizon.

I do not say that we are approaching the spiritual unification of the world. We are still far from that, if indeed we shall ever realize it, or if it is even desirable that we should realize it. But if industrial architecture, for instance, which pursues its own end rather than seeks to please—perhaps, after all, the way not to displease—is roughly outlining before us a universal language, I do not believe it can ever imprint upon this language a uniform accent, nor do I hope that it will do so. The mobility of the spirit, favored by the exigencies of environments and the mixture of the species, should, in my opinion, continue to accept all the living varieties of its expressions in the arts, tending, for that matter, through a growing appreciation of the universal conditions of its own conservation, to be understood by a more and more extended number of men.

It is not necessary that the desire for spiritual unity which is growing in the bosom of the élite, should become, in the multitudes, a need of uniformity. Those who are not capable of grasping the stammerings of this unity in the innumerable idols by which all the races of the earth have staked out their path, are also the least capable of bringing to their own race a contribution powerful enough to permit it to leave its mark on the future.

When you have understood the profound causes of a tendency opposed to your own—or seemingly opposed to your own—you are seized with a strange tenderness for it, which arises because you have found in it your own doubts and struggles. You choose thenceforth the road that was instinctively and became logically your own, with all the more decision and lightheartedness the less you know yourself understood by the men who have gone through the same battles as you. On the day when those who love peace understand the grandeur that can clothe war, perhaps they will be closer to the universal peace they wish to bestow upon us. On the day when this religion appreciates the esoteric symbols of this other, it will not be far from admitting the rites that are the furthest removed from its own. The academician who is revolted by a Hindu idol will be closer to Raphael on the day when he feels the spiritual power which the Hindu idol represents.

Whether one feels it or not, whether one wishes it or not, a universal solidarity unites all the acts and all the images of men, not only in space but also and especially in time. The intuitive, intimate notion of time, always living and present, is moreover the best means at our disposal for seizing the inner meaning of all the figures of dimensional space, which it has deposited upon its road as a river deposits its alluvions. One understands everything the moment one goes back to the sources. A Negro wooden image and a Greek marble are not so far apart as one thinks. Let one look at a pure work of the Egyptian Middle Empire if one wishes to grasp, in the rhythmic equilibrium of its undulating surfaces, the passage of the rough and ingenuous planes of the first into the free but concentric movements of the second.

In fact, the affirmation of this solidarity is by no means the fruit of a mystical intuition. This solidarity really exists. It belongs to the development of universal history of which it was one of the driving forces, perhaps the strongest and most supple of all. The art of all time, the art of every place, grow closer and closer together. No doubt it is the immemorial Negro art which, through the valley of the Nile, spread over the two worlds when Polynesian art, one of its branches perhaps, arrived and blossomed in America, or, in the Malay isles, met the currents that carried up the Ganges and the Irrawaddy the spirit of Greece and

Egypt transformed by its passage through Assyria, Persia, India, and Indo-China, the latter impregnated with the Chinese soul which had, moreover, been fecundated by India and Persia, by way of the gorges of the Brahmaputra and the Tarim.

The circle of universal art is completed when Persia, on the other hand, spreads in Asia the Arab art that emerged from Roman art and Byzantine art, themselves branches of Greek art, when the progress of Islam encountered in Italy, in Spain, in France, the degenerate forms of this Greek art cast up by the navigators on the shores of the Mediterranean and ascending the Danube and the Rhone to confront there, in the cathedral, the musical spirit descended through the valley of the Oise from the plains of the North. Especially when its great expressions are unaware of each other and their common sources are lost in the night does the evolution of the intelligence seem to pass everywhere through almost similar phases of organic integration, harmonic equilibrium, and critical dissolution which give to its appearances surprising analogies of structure, rhythm, and accent.

Let one follow, if one doubts this, the parallel march of the Greek and French statues; in the one case from the *Orantes* of the Acropolis to the athletes of Lysippus and the mausoleum of Scopas; in the other case from the virgins and the saints of the porches of Chartres to those of the porches of Bourges, passing, there, through the pediments of the Parthenon and Olympia, here, through the kings of Amiens and the prophets of Rheims. Or, if one prefers to draw at haphazard from the repertory of forms, without troubling about schools and techniques, dates, mythical pretexts, or local character, one has only to compare this Greek terra cotta found in the tombs of Tanagra with this Chinese terra cotta found in the tombs of the Tangs, this bas-relief from Moissac or Arles with this bas-relief from Angkor-Vat, this foliage of a church of Ile-de-France with this foliage of an Indian stupa, this Japanese painting of the fifteenth century with this Sienese painting, and the frescoes of reindeer hunters with the frescoes of Bushmen. In such a comparison one will find moving relationships that suggest identity of origins and cause one to understand that flint axes or human bones can hardly be distinguished from one another whether one discovers them under the alluvial deposits of the Missouri or the Niger or rolling among the pebbles of a river of France or a torrent of Alaska.

It is natural henceforth that the intelligence, after having, through the studies of the archæologists, rigorously classified the forms of art that express it in all places and at all times, tends to find under their divergences a sort of unity of plan, following a labor similar to that which Lamarck accomplished in connection with the natural forms differentiated by his predecessors. The spirit of the forms is one. It circulates within them like the central fire that revolves at the heart of the planets and determines the height and the profile of their mountains according to the degree of resistance and the constitution of the soil.

The images of the gods are as unstable as possible, even if it is a question only of the gods of a single people, precisely because they represent, in the world of appearances, the invisible circulation of a permanent force, determined on breaking or transforming all obstacles, which has run through its arteries, animated its nerves, united and salted down its bones ever since the origin of man. It is the permanence of this force that we must find and demonstrate under the diversity and the variability of the symbols that conceal it. I ask nothing better than that it should be called God, on condition that its essence remain intangible and only allow one to perceive, from time to time, a more or less essential, more or less profound aspect of its being, which it is the unique task of the poet to reveal before it vanishes for ever. A very moving myth of the Polynesian cosmogony teaches us that a god only becomes a god at the moment when he assumes form. This is true. But it is also true that at the moment when he assumes form he begins to die.

Thus, the work expressing the unanimous plastic drama is for us all the more poignant because it strives to give more stability and to impose more durable static laws on an image of life which it feels to be continually more unstable and more involved in the future through a more imperious dynamism.

The whole history of an artist, the whole history of a school, the whole history of art is dominated and conditioned by this drama—through the imperishable desire to hold fast the universal life that escapes us at every instant, in the image that is capable of defining it for all time. If one does not comprehend this, no form of art is intelligible outside the narrowest naturalism. If one does comprehend it, the forms most remote from the appearances of life—Aztec art, for instance, which is almost illegible at the first glance and unites, in the equilibriums of its masses, the most anomalous and often the least definite objects and organs—become immediately and plainly intelligible. They obtain that quality of supernatural viability in which the highest expressions of lyricism, the rising intoxication of life becoming conscious of its ascent, come into communication. The modeler of gods, at bottom, is the spiritual universe hastening unceasingly in pursuit of its center of gravity which, by turns, invites and then shuns its embrace. Art is only the humble and marvelous image of the cosmic order itself, that state of provisional equilibrium between chaos on this side and chaos on that. Those who deny that it is of use should consider what would happen to man if the force that maintains the planets in their orbit suddenly ceased to exist.

These are big words, perhaps, if one thinks of this fable of La Fontaine, this Bœotian figurine, this Persian colored print, this playful young woman of Fragonard offering between two fingers the strawberry of her breast. Nevertheless, could we seize the most furtive grace, taste the discreet accord of the most delicate tones, penetrate the anguish or the sweetness of those eyes that meet ours, if subtle antennæ, starting from the secret centers of our sensibility, did not unite it infallibly to the mysterious, even if imponderable attraction of these arts? The connection is established through lines of force that assure the absolute solidarity, both biological and spiritual, of their structure and our own, and affirm the presence, in them as in ourselves, of two similar needs for harmony which their unexpected accord intoxicates with security.

There is nothing incompatible between this mathematical certitude that we seek confusedly in a work of art and its always fugitive and always alluring life which we can only surprise there in flashes. Quite on the contrary, we find an obscure consolation in this perpetual flight, as soon, at least, as we know that it turns unwearyingly about a center that exists in us as in it, although we are incapable of placing and fixing it for all time.

Thus there is no end to the drama or to the indefinite anguish of man that offers him, until the universe has ceased to exist, first for him, afterwards for his species, a limitless visible field of emotion and activity. I think this is the character, at once logical and fluctuating, tragic and consoling, of art, which desires that all definitions one has given and will give of it shall remain and should remain incomplete. Art, which is our reason for being, will only perish with us. It is art that nourishes and maintains our spiritual energy. It is art that delivers to us the secret of the hopeless but necessary effort of Sisyphus. Man emerges from the ashes of man and sees again the divine face the moment he surprises the new shoots among the ashes of the altar he has overthrown.

I am afraid I have not succeeded in maintaining, in the pages of this book, that grand circulation of energy which renders the most insignificant image of a bird found in the sands of Egypt as inevitably consistent with an aeroplane of to-day as is the most worn of the silhouettes of the mammoth engraved on the walls of the Fond de Gaume with the Pagoda of Srirangam or the Parthenon of Pericles. What I should also like to have shown is how a statue taken from any temple whatsoever reproduces the very profiles of this temple through its planes, whose moving waves will seize in space, in order to incorporate them with themselves, the passages and the reflections that determine painting and cause to be born from painting, through their mingled rhythms, the invisible harmonies from which music will spring.

I would have wished, finally, to reduce to a few evident relations the infinite complexity of the relations revealed by the infinite variety of the images, and the depth of the abysses which their study opens in us. In fact, it seems to me probable that the relations expressed by Phidias, for example, simple as they appear to us, nevertheless remain essential, and that if the impression made on our sensibilities by a cathedral or by a symphony of Beethoven is more harmonious or more intense, it is because the analytic elements expressed by them are not yet as intimately a part of us as the ideas in which the spirit of Phidias once recognized its sources. What we call "depth" is perhaps at the beginning of each of our inquiries. One finds, in the thinkers of the time before Phidias, intuitions as complex as those of the philosophers of India or Germany, intuitions that all contribute to form the intellectual harmony of Plato, as highly refined as it may seem. A single curve expresses one day what a hundred entangled curves before that time evoked confusedly. Simplicity is an achievement incessantly ambushed at every turn of the road and which poets alone can wrest from the immense and always renewed sum of the unknown.

I have therefore not been able, I have not known how to be simpler. And perhaps, after all, that is not my function. I watch dancing, but alas, I am not a dancer. The most candid being can *feel*, or even *express* the most admirable poem which the most complicated being will always show himself incapable of *understanding* and *explaining*.

So many create or act with direct force while I suffer and hesitate to seize a solution that unceasingly escapes me. One can find in the slightest sketch of a master—or perhaps even of a little boy drawing something in a spirit of sheer impudence—matter enough to ruin the edifice that I have tried to build and that represents thirty years of meditation. God is a child who amuses himself, passes from laughter to tears without reason, and every day invents the world for the torment of the abstractors of its quintessence, the pedants and the preachers who pretend to teach him his trade of creator.

ELIE FAURE

Paris, Spring 1930

THE SPIRIT OF THE FORMS

I do not paint the being,
I paint the passage.
—Montaigne

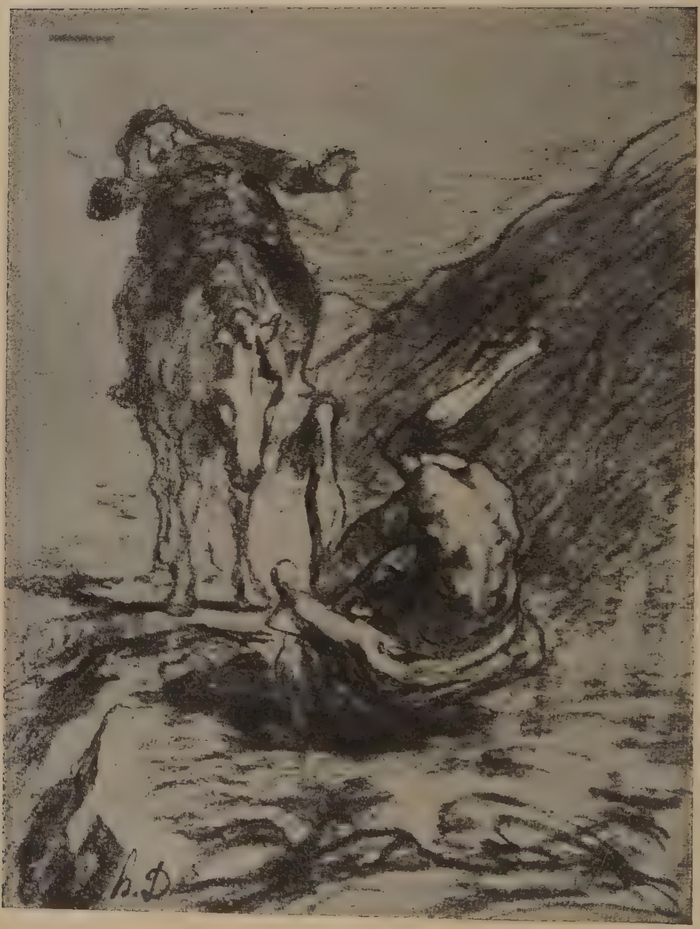

Fig. 2

Daumier

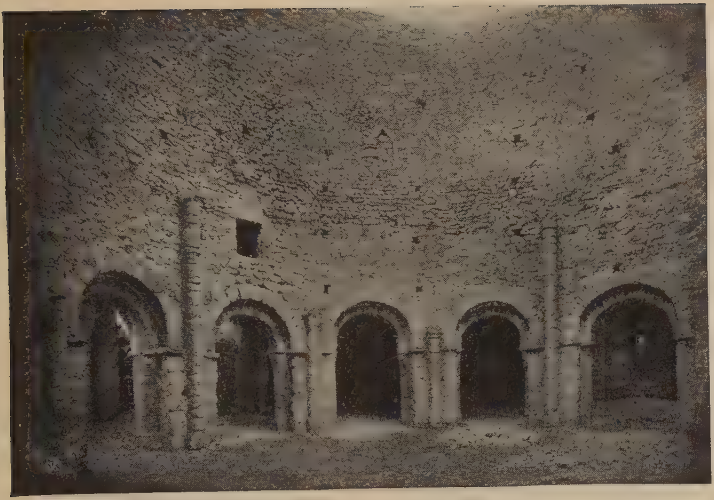

FIG. 3

ROMAN TEMPLE, FRANCE (Brittany)

Chapter I. THE GREAT RHYTHM

I

THE older I grow, the more I observe, the more I notice how I live, the less can I conceive it possible to consider the history of peoples and the history of the mind otherwise than as a series of alternations, now rapid and now precipitous, of disintegrations through knowledge and integrations through love.

It is the rhythm that Laplace, Lamarck, Spencer catch in the evolution of the universal drama itself, beginning with the original phase in which the nebula was formed, to end in the final phase in which shattered suns and dead planets return to the dust of the skies, passing through the successive stages that lead from matter to life, from life to mind, from mind to matter—into which mind is absorbed, acquiring from it renewed strength, after having conceived it and directed it for a time. It is the rhythm of the chemical drama in which synthesis and analysis are alternately engendered. It is the rhythm of the physiological drama in which the systole and the diastole by turn fling life to the periphery and take it up again, poisoned and benumbed, to remake it. It is the rhythm of the biological drama whence, from the sexual cell, surges the adventure of the superior organism which hunger and love cause to

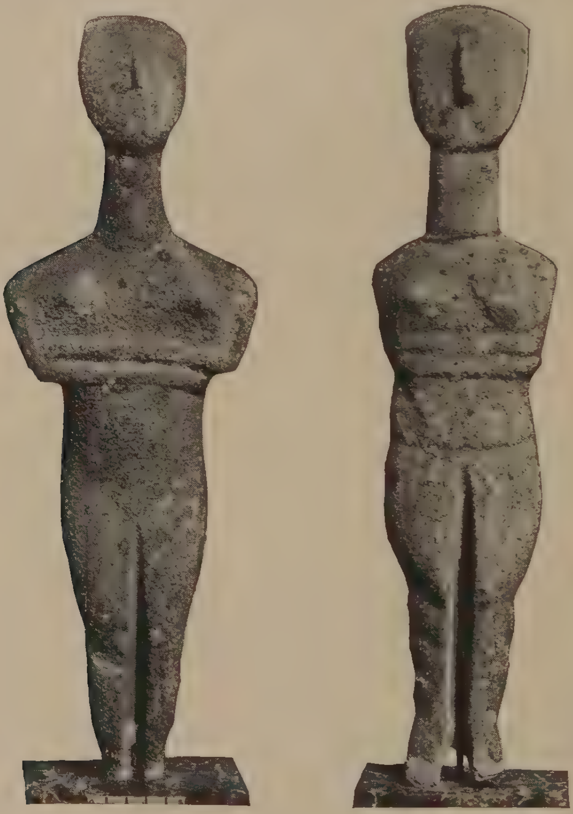

Fig. 4
Greece (vii Century)

recreate the sexual cell in order to precipitate themselves, through it, into a new organism.

What we know of history is still and will probably always be trifling. Perhaps, indeed no doubt, it is only beginning. But it is necessary to resign oneself to learning nothing of it if one does not decide to seek in its unfolding an influence, confused beyond question, of which one can seize the aspect when one regards it from afar and where, instead of considering it according to its so-called advances, its so-called recoils, its avowed intentions or our avowed interests, one resolutely seeks this rhythm in which the spirit, now determined by its events, now reacting in order to organize them, only plays the role of regulator, but of a unique regulator.

Already, in what remains of it, that residue of intelligence which persists on the surface of its inner movements and persists there alone when everything else of these same movements has disappeared—the verbal poem that inscribes itself in the book, the plastic poem that inscribes itself in the monument, the scientific poem that inscribes itself in the formula—it seems that a sufficiently clear curve appears, of which the ascensions represent periods of association, and the descents represent periods of moral

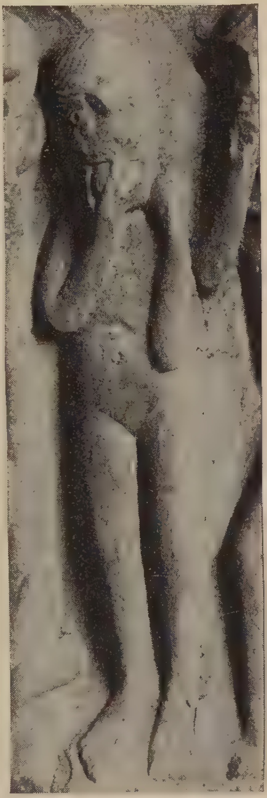

Fig. 5

France (xi Century)

dissociation between men, with a maximum of cohesion at the summits of the curve, a maximum of anarchy at its lowest points. The Saint-Simonians described as "organic" and "critical" these alternating periods. But they did not seek to understand the corroborating testimony, to my sense irrefutable, in idols, temples, dwellings, tombs.

If one succeeds in discovering this character in these forms, I believe one is authorized to extend it to the whole of history of which they constitute so to speak the spiritual crystallization, the highest life of the soul arrested in letters of stone at the moment when it contradicts itself and is torn apart in the drama of events.

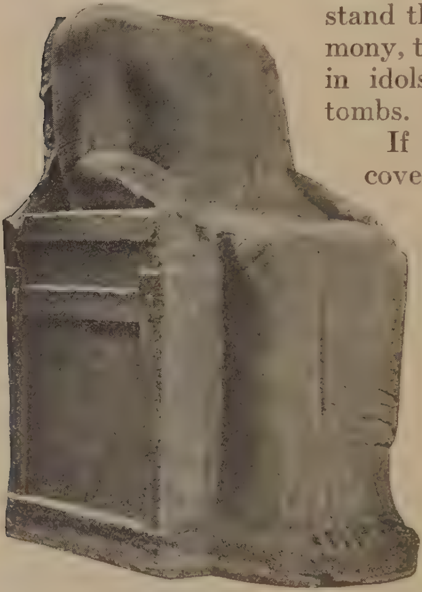

Fig. 6

Greece (Beginning of the vi Century)

Without question, in facts that are studied from too close by, this rhythm does not appear so simple. There are breaks, seams, infringements. In the bronze there is a flaw. A fissure stripes the architrave. A new sentiment awakens that makes the pyramid tremble or the dancer trip. It happens, for instance, that in the case of a people in full and regular evolution, a pacific or warlike invasion breaks, dislocates, or simply turns aside the curve of this evolution. In the essential themes of the symphony of history, which are now the accord of all the spiritual elements introduced by the multitude into the monument, now the definition, in individual works, of those elements dispersed in the search for a new communion, other themes enter confusedly—provisional syntheses, researches for an embryonic equilibrium shattered as soon as they are achieved, attempts that are only sketches—or miscarry, or do not endure.

In the heart of the intellectual analysis that characterizes the Hellenic spirit, decidedly in dissolution from the time of Socrates, the moral synthesis that will define Christianity already speaks in stammering accents, even in the plastic form, the gesticulating groups, the deep sunken eyes, the equivocal play of light on the surface of statues. In the heart of the Occidental analysis, on the other hand, when the art of cathedral-building is breaking down in France, when the Florentine or Sienese palace itself loses the purity of its

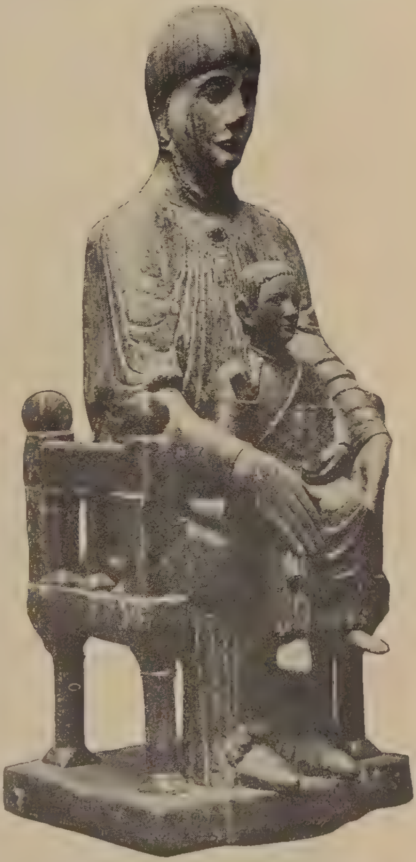
Fig. 7
France (First half of xii Century)

outlines and encumbers itself with ornaments, the moral organism of Protestantism attempts to build a new monument over the débris of the æsthetic organism of Catholicism. Nevertheless, despite these accidents, these advances, these regressions, these apparent contradictions, the grandiose alternation of the religious illusion that erects the temples in a fury of love and the critical knowledge that overthrows them, in order to open, by a minute enquiry, other roads to the spirit, remains a permanent, and to my mind decisive, reality.

Here is the Doric affirmation, the architectural unity coinciding everywhere with an incontestable mythical unity, the austere monument on which the unanimous piety of the crowds inscribes, on the pediments and the metopes, the motionless dance of forms, the harsh and wholesome certitude displayed by the purity of the outline. Here are the ornate capitals, the fragile, fluted column, the isolated and more and more mobile statue, the artist outside the common workshop, in the private studio and in the world, the drama torn away from the collective conventions of the theater in order to enter the individual meanderings of the sophistical and the romantic, religion corroded by analysis, sensuality turning to eroticism, and corrupting sentiment, the intelligence inaugurating experience and substituting a fragmentary truth for a universal truth.

Here, after Æschylus, is Aristotle. Here is the Christian affirmation, the Catholic dogma blocked out in the Roman temple the thickness and unbroken mass of which express its coherence; the rigorous rhythm of the elongated figures that people its capitals and its tympanums, later the flight of the pillars, the soaring of the vaults express the transport of the whole people toward the invincible hope that the universe is only the sensible symbol of a marvelous world promised to the unanimity, the candor of the faith.

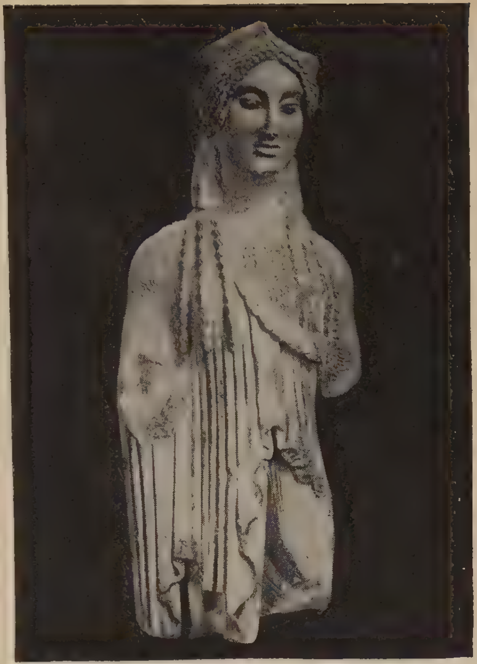

Fig. 8

Greece (Second half of the vi Century)

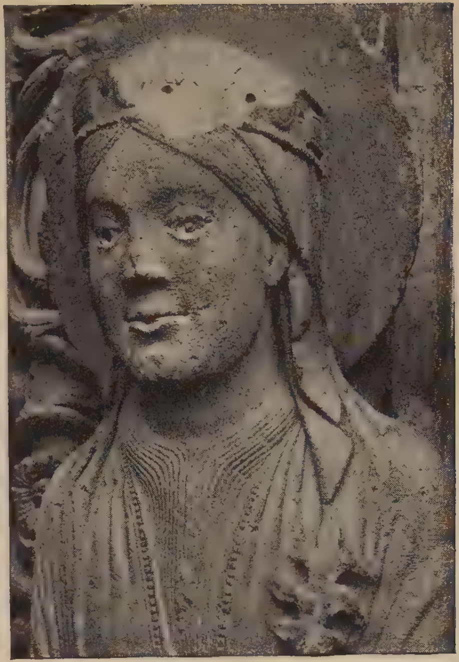

Fig. 9

France (Second half of the xii Century)

Here, in the very arrises of these vaults, in these figures that become gradually slender and complicated, a curiosity is born, grows, affirms itself as conquering and tyrannical: here are the vanished symbol and the object scrutinized for itself, the flower born from the seed, the woman in love studied in the virgin mother, the man springing from the god. Here the printed character replaces the wrought stone, the spirit rushes to the conquest of terrestrial happiness, becoming cruel in order to attain it and discovering behind the paradisiac threshold of knowledge, where it entered dazzled, the hell of doubt and remorse.

Here is Montaigne, then Pascal, after Dante and Saint Thomas. Yesterday, here as well as there, man went to meet the world, seeking to incorporate himself with it in a vast religious unity in which his intuitive pantheism affirmed itself in his instinct to conceive the monument according to the universal plan. To-day, here as there, he draws the world into himself, seeking to incorporate it in his being in a strict personal unity in which his reasoned anthropocentrism shows in the care with which he expresses his sentiments. Socrates dreaming, toward the end of his days, of learning music again is the conscious symbol of this gigantic oscillation that ceaselessly swings our spiritual history between the peaks of mystical intoxication and the peaks of reason. When one has scoured in all directions the clear but limited territory of the intelligence, one finds oneself one day or another on the edge of the abyss of the unknowable where the intoxicating need for a new illusion reappears.

II

If this outline seems to you a little too schematic, imagine the evolution of the Greek statue born toward the middle of the seventh century, B.C. and arriving at the limit of its growth toward the middle of the third, or after four hundred years. And follow with the same glance the march of the political body which will show you, if there is any logic in the form, the significance of the rhythm it must obey.

In Hellenic society as we know it, toward the eighth century of the ancient era, for instance, the myth prevails uncontested. It even attains its phase of full crystallization. It is, for the men of the tribe, the unique reason for being born, loving, suffering, dying. Held in common, universally admitted at least in the same tribe, the belief leaves no room for doubt. Certainly, God is not a single being. He is, on the contrary, multiple. But belief is single. And it is this that is divine. It is upon this belief alone that the moral unitary principle rests without which neither the city nor the family would be. Marriage is holy, therefore indissoluble. Celibacy is forbidden. Morally, the child exists only as a function of the father, who exists himself only as a function of dead ancestors whose sepulchers sanctify—and even legitimize—his essential quality. Not only the individual does not exist, but his existence would be contrary to the very conception of the home which is perhaps the nucleus, perhaps the contraction of the city[1], in any case forming with it an indissoluble organism from which nothing can be taken away without ruining one or the other.

The liberty of the human being is neither conceived nor conceivable outside the family group which no longer conceives its own liberty outside of its setting and its gods, the neighboring family groups bounding

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[1] From the point of view I assume, it matters little whether the family, as Fustel de Coulanges would have it, is the embryo of the State, or whether the State, as the sociologists of to-day believe, is anterior to the organization of the family. When the great collective art appears, State and family are profoundly solidary and constitute the apparently indestructible social frame where this art develops.

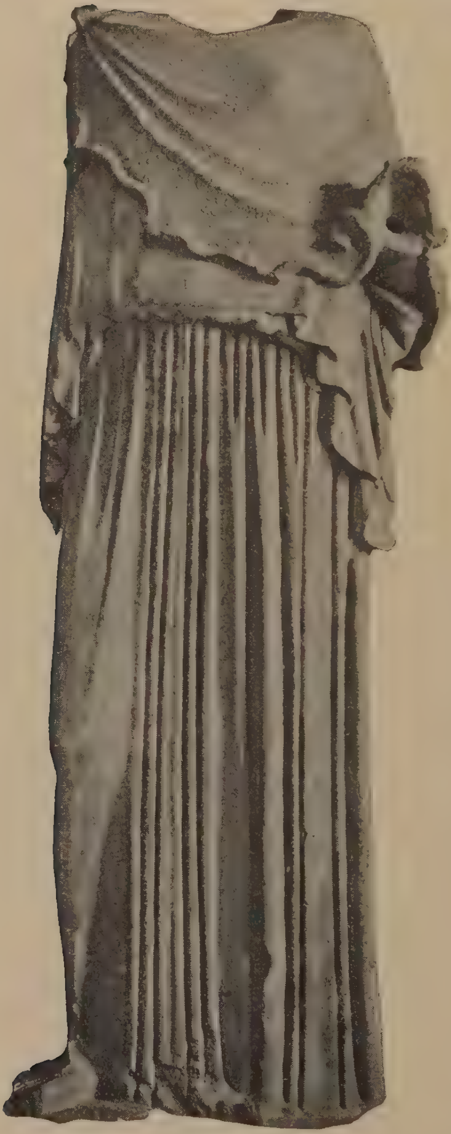

Fig. 10
Greece (First half of the v Century)

it on all sides. The whole of human society is immersed in the diffused divinity of nature, personified by the gods that connect man with her by a thousand bonds of rites on which the laws are based. The sanctity of the soil is a reality the more inexcrable the more it represents a spiritual style menaced by the rival tribe, and the more difficult it is to maintain. The moral universe is a single block.

Now at this moment the *Xoana*, the primitive idol cut in olive-wood, is nothing but an almost formless embryo, a roughly shaped doll in which the forms are indicated after the symbolic manner of a child who draws heedlessly and makes a great rectangle for the body, a smaller rectangle for the head, two narrower and longer rectangles for the arms.[1] In comparison with the statues of the following century, it is like those peasant houses one still sees in our days in certain Greek countrysides beside the oldest marble sanctuaries: four vertical posts that will become the peristyle, four horizontal posts that will become the architrave.[2] It satisfies the simplest of spiritual needs, as this cabin satisfies the simplest of our material needs. As yet almost no differentiation exists, in the minds of those who have made them, between the natural elements which they utilize both for belief and for shelter and the sense of this belief and the comfort of this shelter. The matrix that binds them is the common belief. The members are prisoners of it, as the individual is a prisoner of the social principle from which he does not dare

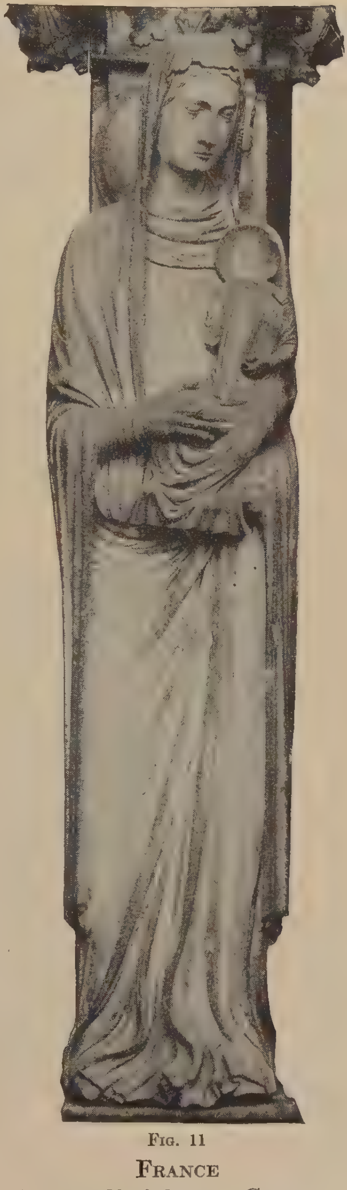

Fig. 11

France

(First half of the xiii Century)

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[1] Fig. 4.

[2] Fig. 130.

and cannot and will not enfranchise himself, from which he does not even dream of enfranchising himself, because this premature enfranchisement would immediately involve his downfall. He is ignorant of the relations that rivet him to this principle, the régime of castes imposing them upon him for his own good. Society, like the idol, is impersonal, congealed, symmetrical, so to speak. The writers of the time are the legists whom the spirit of the gods inspires when in rhythmic prose, they chant the verses of the sacred law.

A half century. Due to the frictions of families among themselves, the family, while still as firmly rooted, has nevertheless become less rigid than the city. It infuses into the city a life that is more and more organic. The multiplication of the social cells enlarges their horizon, while an aristocracy supported upon a morality that is intact, and believing in the interest of its own conservation, recalls the chisel that cuts in the marble the simplest planes and the most rigid profiles. The idol has become denser. It tends vaguely to the circular form, as if to gratify a primitive need for mass and unity. An architectonic instinct as confused as it is essential appears in the hanging arms, the parallel legs, the horizontal shoulders, the almost conic torso in which the bony heads and the muscular masses already undulate feebly, a whole stiff and hard ensemble, the symmetrical elements of which express the feeling of an elementary rhythm like two feet striking the ground in cadence or two hands clapping at regular intervals.[1] No individuality. Although this statue may be called an athlete, it is an impersonal monument that represents almost any athlete, almost any naked man. It offers only one difference of ethnic quality from the Ionic statue, which appears about the same time in the Ægean Isles, the spirit remaining the

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[1] Fig. 6.

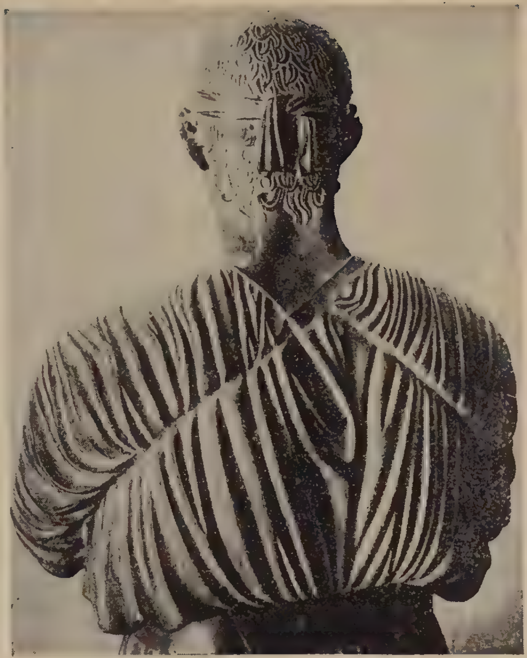

Fig. 12
Greece (First half of the v Century)

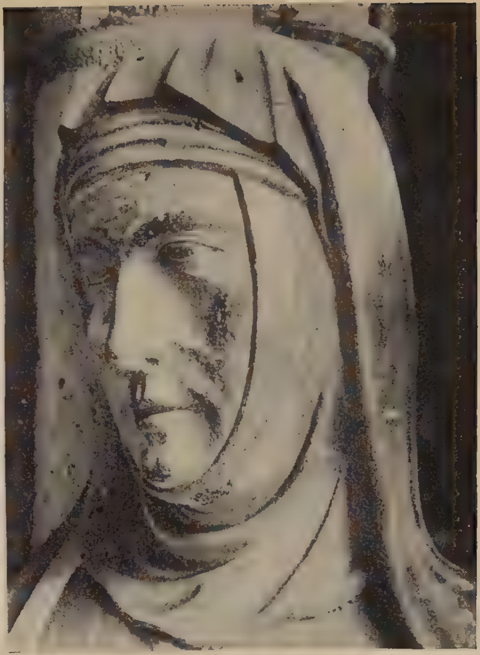

Fig. 13
France (First half of the xiii Century)

same and evolving the same relationships out of the same interrogated elements. The Doric statues are men, the Ionic statues are women, the former hard, all of a piece, the latter sensual, equivocal, subjected to more furtive planes, with a tendency to a more insinuating sphericity, the limbs more imprisoned.[1] But, here as there, it is always architectural: nothing emerges, nothing can emerge from this vertical cylinder in which all the movements and all the prominences are lost, like the knots of the tree, before the birth of the branches, in the mass of the rugged trunk. Cramped, strained, swollen in this sheath, the deep life assumes there a benumbed character, still somnolent, but of an impressive and irreducible unity.

Another half century. The increasing antagonism of interests and the abuses of the aristocracy create in the masses of the people secret currents that shake the edifice, feebly at first, but enough to awaken there new needs, new ideas. If the solidity of the castes seems still unmoved and can appear even increased, since they feel their original integrity to be menaced, they are less completely shut up within themselves. See the heroes, the horses of Delphi, the *Caryatides* of Cnidos, the *Orantes* of the old Parthenon. In these touching statues in which the Doric male and the Ionic female eye one another but refuse to unite, the plane appears for the first time as a more definite idea, a little less lost in the ensemble, traversed by a great shudder. It strives to emerge from an anonymous architectonic formula in order to build, in the clay which it carves, an autonomous idol stirring a little, a strange smile on the lips, a foot or an arm thrust forward. Its difficult passage animates the profiles a little, makes the surfaces undulate indistinctly. The equilibrium of the masses delineates itself, succeeding their symmetry, and it is to the movement of profound forces traveling over the form within that the planes owe their vigor.[1] The cylinder is living, the knots and the shoots bursting into bloom, the branches are growing out of the trunk. The writers of the time are philosophical poets who create a system of the world, a monumental display that is roughly sketched, but grandiose and moving, emerging painfully from the myth without the will or the power to separate itself from it. In thought, in politics, as in the idol itself, the individual dimly appears in a few monstrous brains.

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[1] Figs. 134, 135.

Another half century. Through tribes, through parties, through classes, ardent groups are organized, still stiff, almost mechanical, in which, although the instinct of the antagonistic interests and needs already appears strongly, the individual consciousness of each of their elements, cannot yet express itself. Drama is born in the theater because it is born in the social body. If Æschylus makes the pitiless laws of custom and destiny weigh upon man, a light grows in him, the animating spark of which Prometheus has taken from God. It is this, henceforth, that constitutes the unique center about which, in the idol of this time, the masses gravitate, as if it were necessary that man, who is trying to define himself, should still remain within the circle so deeply grooved around his activity by his ancestors, so that he may deepen and unify this activity. Still rude, but less strained, the plane gathers up the light that unites it with the neighboring planes through irregular but continuous passages, so placed as to construct or rather to suggest the same turning surface, from whatever side it is seen. One sees the *Charioteer* of Delphi and the warriors of Ægina emerging from the uniform mold, whose almost absolute roundness had been imprisoning their movements.[2] Disengaged from architecture, a monument complete in itself, full, defined, circular, the statue finds its relation to universal life and recognizes its place in the midst of everything that exists. The myth is still almost intact, but its symbolic meaning rises to the level of the peaks of the spirit.

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[1] Fig. 8. [2] Figs. 6, 12.

A half-century, and we touch the supreme point of the oscillation. The pediments of Olympia have told of the antithetical struggle of the powers of the soul against the powers of instinct; halfway between these sculptures and the already less poignant pediments of Phidias, there was an imperceptible and perhaps unrealized moment when Hellenism defined the essential moral drama that justifies the existence of man. The choice, a decisive choice, imposes itself on him. Two forces are at work in his heart: on the one hand the intoxication of belonging to a coherent social body that directs all its acts to a common belief designating surely the things that please the gods and those that do not please them, the intoxication of arousing, through all his acts, the unanimous approbation of the dead, and, on the other hand, the desire to explore the new moral regions that curiosity, interest, and a vague but ardent desire lights and develops in his soul, his own soul—the personal

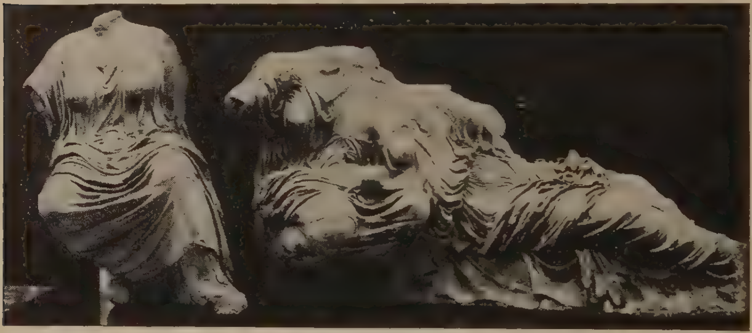

Fig. 14
Greece (Middle of the v Century)

and no doubt single being with its increasing demands. Between the political parties that are of almost equal strength, an uncertain and furious struggle begins, marked by alternating victories and defeats, with sometimes an hour's truce imposed by some powerful spirit. The family, still solid, has become the scene of another, more secret struggle in which the egotism of children, of women, who grow in consciousness, in appetites, in dignity, will become unbounded unless the dignity, the consciousness, and the appetites of its chief remain within the frame of his duties and his rights. The pursuit of wealth and of the pleasures and public honors connected with it, develop strength of character, audacity, skill, knavery in the man who desires it. The power to resolve these universal conflicts that belongs in the family to the father, and, in the city to the master, finds its expression in the heroic firmness that permits Sophocles, faced with the confused intoxication of the old moral unity represented by the chorus, to present the will of the noble man in whom intelligence awakens and combats the whole of the fateful universe that is leagued against him, just as it permits the sculptor of

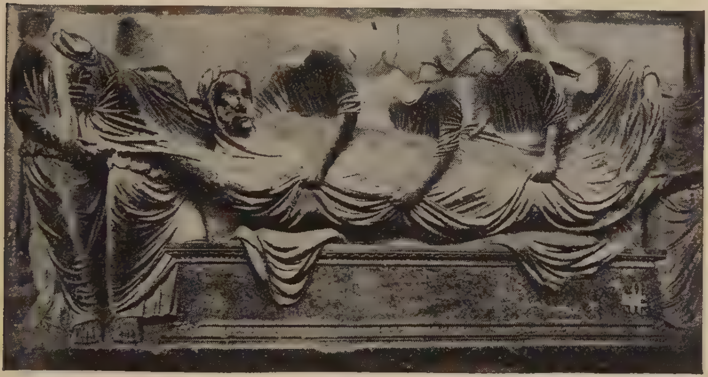

Fig. 15

France (Middle of the xiii Century)

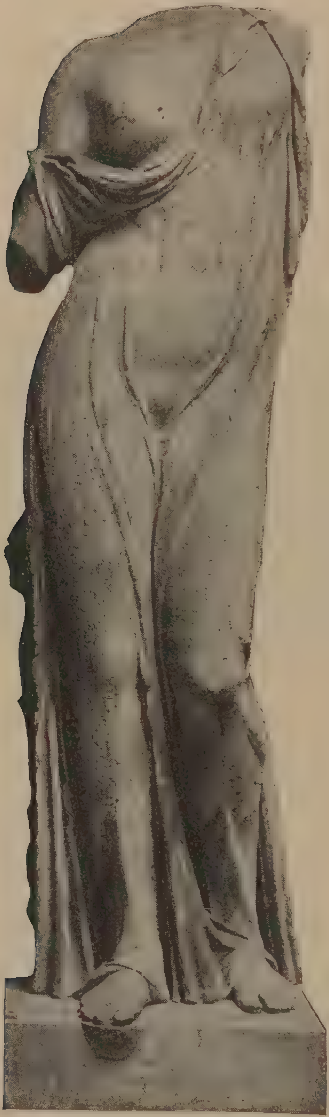

Fig. 16
Greece (End of the v Century)

the same epoch to establish, between contrasted masses and antagonistic gestures, an equilibrium that triumphs over disorder and chaos, that forces them to return to the same ensemble and flings them with the same enthusiasm into a continuous movement. The Doric male and the Ionic female penetrate each other in an embrace which the suppleness of Myron and the vigor of Polycletus by turns knot and unknot, and the statue thus evolved acts, marches, fights, rests in an august liberty. It is no longer merely architecture by itself. It enters, with its neighbors, into a more complex organism, united in monumental undulations in which the forms, however separate, realize, through their succession, a plastic melody of balanced curves.[1] It is like branches spread by the same tree—the *Charioteer* of yesterday—which twist and become entangled, while the sap runs to their very extremity. One finds, in the statue, the whole harmony

[1] Fig. 14.

of the ensemble which itself borrows from the statue the law of its autonomy. Here are the large, bare planes with which the whole surface vibrates, the long silent passages that unite them and animate them in an endless cradling movement. The continuous flow of the great expressive billows takes place with the same energy that drives the blood into the veins and tightens the aponeuroses and the muscles under the skin. The spiritual flame drops into the intervals of silence, to solidify the forms from one end of the pediment to the other.

At this moment, looked at from above and from a distance, if one refuses to see the accidents of the road, a powerful harmony prevails. The parts are so animated by life that the necessity for one engenders itself in the others. Man is face to face with man. He belongs with him to a society of which the principle is accepted by all even if his antagonisms and his contradictions still live on. The plane, in the sculptural technique, is only the necessary persistence of the religious and social laws which the decisive

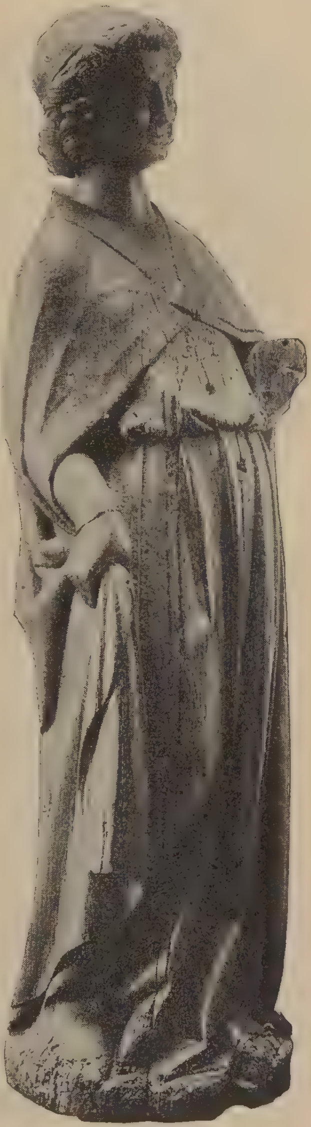

Fig. 17
France
(End of the xiii Century)

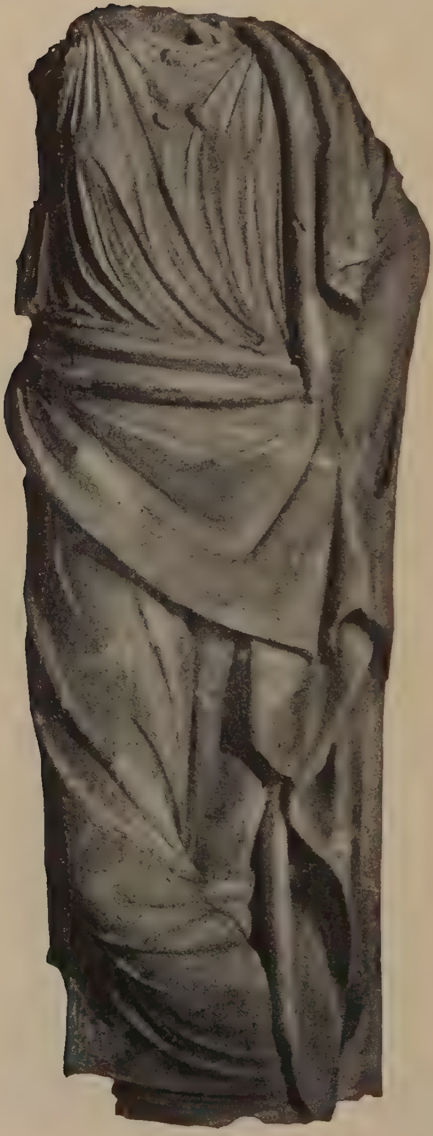

FIG. 18
GREECE (First half of the IV Century)

awakening of the individual conscience unites with the neighboring plane through the undulation of the passage and the line of the profile. Tragedy and sculpture live in the harmonious form of their contrasted elements because, if man affirms himself, the god has not quitted him but confronts him through instinct and conscience, through sensuality and reason, through the idea and the reality in the very heart of the hero.

Another half-century. And here we have the free man, at least free to define himself. He has willed it. He has not the right to complain if progressively doubt, anxiety, anguish invade him in the measure that the family falls apart, the law yields or changes, the city becomes now more indulgent, now more exacting in regard to him; if the myths are disputed and the need to play grows with leisure, celibacy, fortune, the introduction of outside women into the household, the introduction of freed slaves, of naturalized foreigners into the agora, the introduction into the spirit which grows effeminate and complicated, of unknown ideas and images invented by the philosophers, or imported by travelers. The great cosmic syntheses are forgotten or neglected, man having returned into himself, and drawn in with him the diffused god that yesterday peopled the world and lived under all these aspects where the primitive poet ingenuously sought the syntheses. The moralist succeeds the legist, the psychologist the theologian, the sophist the philosopher. Euripides, in the theater, forgets or

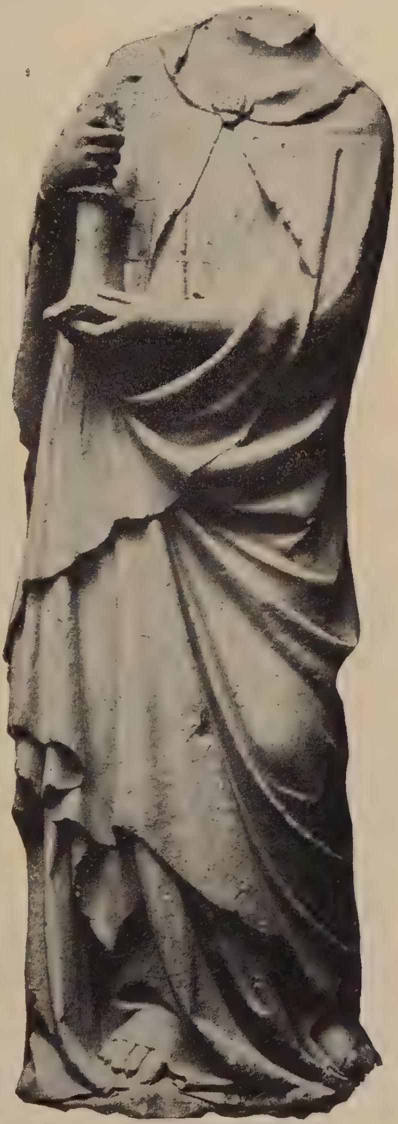

Fig. 19

France

(First half of the xiv Century)

provokes the gods, and delves in the depths of the man's mind in order to ravish his secret. Socrates claims to teach man to know himself and perceives nothing in the world to interest him outside of that knowledge. In vain Aristophanes delivers Socrates and Euripides over to the laughter of the crowd; he keeps step with them, since social criticism mounts the stage with him. The dialectic of Plato leads the principle of unity back to the interior of the being. It is not by chance that democracy triumphs because the increasing need of political equality in the emancipated citizen demands satisfaction. Here the weapon that he has demanded becomes tyrannical—penetration of the projects and interests of others, a stratagem to baffle them, an attention always on the watch to profit by circumstances, to give birth to the drama or take part in it, the critical spirit increasing at the expense of the constructive intelligence—and it isolates from the ensemble the object pursued and surrounded with a too meticulous attention and the too paltry care for detail. The inquiry of Aristotle disperses to infinity the observation, the knowledge, the character of this object. Neither is it by chance that he is the contemporary of Lysippus, and that anatomical science, which he founds, appears at the very hour when the muscular model gradually substitutes itself for the architectural plane.

Not only has the statue at this time come forth from the original matrix, but it forgets what that matrix was. Obstinate restlessness, sensuality surround it. Considered, then caressed with an insistent love, it lets fall the veils that once caused the transparencies and the meanderings of the streams to flow over it.[1] The form gains in sensibility what it loses in energy. Besides, the statue which, a century earlier, having gathered together its strength, aspired to appear in decorative groups, now aspires to isolate itself anew and only reluctantly remains in groups. Individualized, it tries its strength with new gestures, with pensive attitudes. At the risk of dismembering it, its constitutive elements study their own structure. It will soon meet Praxiteles who will tenderly awaken in it the centers of pleasure. After him the psychological passage will profit by the hesitation of the plane and the floating of the profile to encroach upon their domain, to blend, in an increasing confusion, the essential and simple relations which they reveal in the object, and in that way remove itself from the vivifying contacts of this object with the world. The individual is no longer a function of the world. It is the world that becomes a function of the individual. And as the individual is not necessarily a demiurge, he will no longer re-invent the world except by chance impulses.

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[1] Fig. 16.

A half-century later, one will easily grasp the profound social causes of the last stage of the spirit. The myths, broken down, no longer arouse, except in very humble people, anything but revolt or laughter. The stoics and the cynics logically push the moral tendencies of man in the opposite direction, toward the spiritual impasses from which he cannot escape save by renewing his mysticism. Now sensual, now abstract, the cults of the East creep in and replace everywhere the local religion, destroying every day a little more the ancient unity of the spirit. The belief in equality is proclaimed by all, whether overtly or not, since man is the equal of man when he considers himself as gravitating exclusively about one of his two poles—either his instincts in their most intransigent bestiality, or his spirit in its ideal purity disengaged from every carnal tie; and this belief is intensified, in direct ratio to the increasing inequality of conditions. The individual wants to be right against the city, against the family, presently against the individual. His own individuality gradually rends him asunder. The idol is now a fantastic image which the genius of a solitary artist frequently can render living, but which the spread of the craft and the vulgarization of culture condemn most often to express only the mediocre anxieties of the anecdote and of vogue loved by "free" souls seeking to delude their restlessness, satisfy their folly, tickle their self-sufficiency, cure their ennui.

The statue enjoys henceforth an egotistical independence that only increases its torment. Too isolated, now, it calls to its aid the elements of the picturesque. Its action begins to break the ideal circle in which it but lately inscribed itself almost mechanically. The passage inundates the plane, which weakens, hesitates, barely contains the inner life that is frittered away in details. Stuffs, draped in all directions, mask its insufficiency.[1] The brush of shadow plays upon it, effaces it, renders it equivocal or deceitful. An indefinite undulation envelops, like a fog, the inner structure which is covered over and then melts away. The too narrow parallelisms, or rather the too eccentric movements stiffen the monumental ensemble or move it from its orbit. The unity becomes incoherent or breaks. Too heavily laden, the branches crack. The relations float and begin to intertwine at random.

When Rhodes and Pergamos were in the ascendant, a half-century later, the organism was decomposed. In the increasing social and political anarchy, the constant mingling over all the shores of the Orient, of opposing mysticisms, worn-out Sophistries, mutually destructive private interests, in the appeals to a beneficent tyranny and a purifying barbarism, the plastic frontiers were forced on every side. The architecture of the idol was no longer even a memory. The modeling having lost

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[1] Fig. 18.

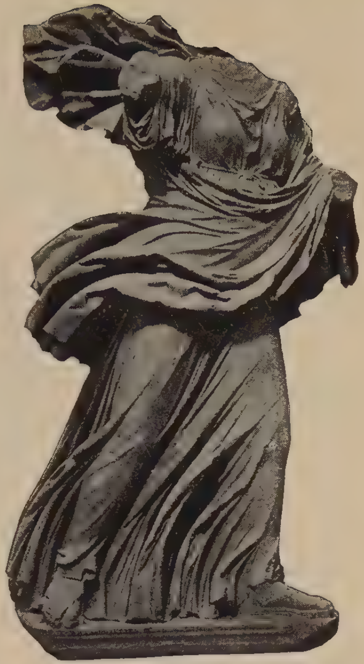

Fig. 20
GREECE

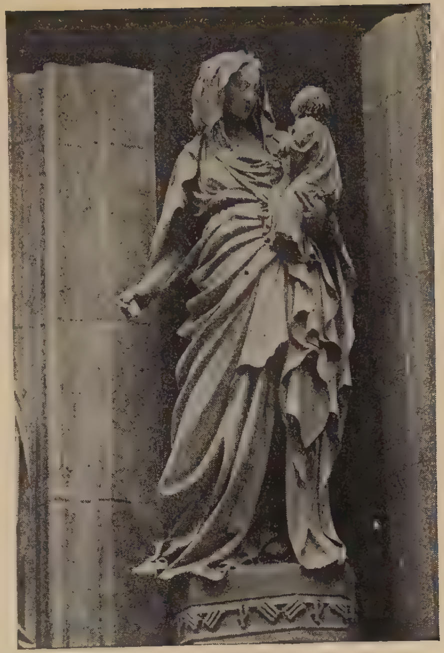

Fig. 21
FRANCE
(Second half of the XIV Century)

the plane, tried to follow step by step the anatomical incidents that broke the profiles and peopled the but lately expressive silence of the surfaces for the benefit of the picturesque little story and the most banal sentiment. The wild gesticulation, completely disoriented, expresses a moral disorder from which all continuity of reasoning and action, all logical structure, all equilibrium have disappeared. The spirit which, dislocating the plane, then playing with the passage, had quitted for a century the inner regions of the statue now appears in the twisting hands, the hanging legs, the locked muscles, the convulsed faces, the invading attributes and the disordered hair.[1] It is not only that the center of attraction of the masses is lost. The sculptor no longer knows that this center once existed and that it determined the entire form, whose movements and surfaces gravitated about it. Spread over all the incidents, all the prominences of the statue, weak sensibility and mediocre sensation attempt to substitute their clamor and their emphasis for the powerful global consciousness that united, in the monumental form, the knowledge and the love of the object with the belief that the object made part of a sacred ensemble of which religion, the city, the family, war, peace, food, birth, and death are solidary manifestations. One would say that the gesticulations and the grimaces of the idol cry out for its lost unity. Besides, it is no longer an idol. It is an article of merchandise.

III

If now one follows from close-by the evolution of sculpture in France, in which Christian art attains its most complete and also its most moving development, one realizes that it is identical, aside from its motives,

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[1] Figs. 20, 22, 24.

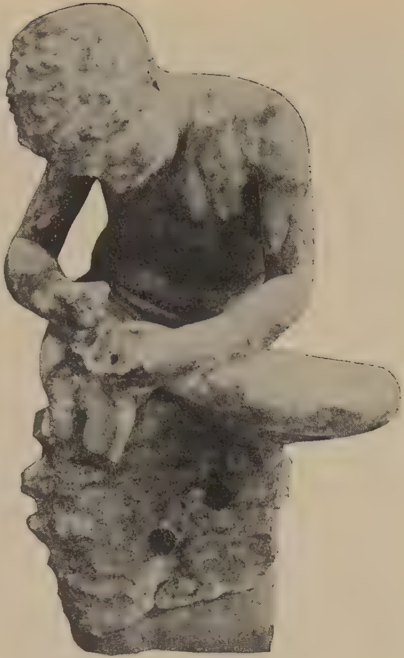

Fig. 22

Greece (iii Century)

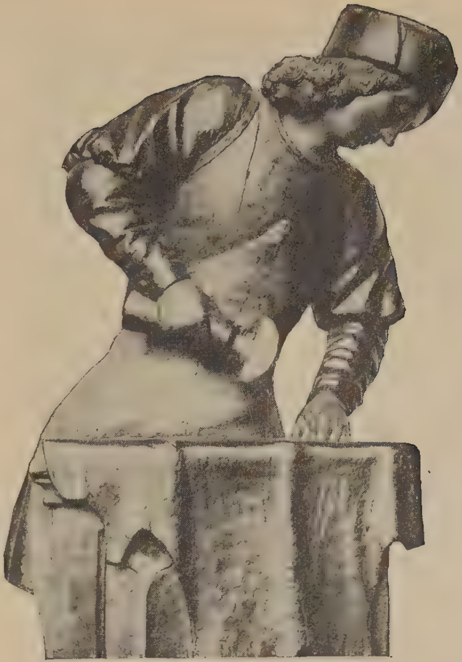

Fig. 23

France (xv Century)

with that of Greek sculpture.[1] And this in the course of a period of almost equal duration, from the end of the eleventh to the end of the fifteenth century, or also four hundred years. One could take, here and there, a statue or a decorative group, place them both face to face and follow their parallel march from half-century to half-century, to establish here as well as there the progress of the undifferentiated and global organism to the organism whose functions gradually differentiate, then balance their antagonism and their solidarity, then separate too much from one another, then lose sight of their relations and return to chaos.[2]

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[1] The choice of the illustrations for this text has been very difficult. Since the proof clearly springs from the demonstration, it is necessary that the examples should be chosen as much as possible, in the one case and the other, from the same school. But if it is relatively easy to do this for Greece up to the fourth century, and if the Doric and Ionic schools and the Attic school that rose from them can be invoked alone, or almost alone, it is otherwise with France. The sculpture of Chartres, for example, from which I have chosen my best examples, was developed only from the middle of the twelfth century to the end of the thirteenth, or during about one hundred and fifty years, scarcely more than a third of the period embraced. There were, besides, in France as elsewhere, from one region to another, intercrossing influences that were able here and there to cause the image-makers to take a different direction from the natural evolution to which the local tradition would certainly have led them. Sometimes, one or several stone-cutters, coming from a neighboring or faraway province, became the inspiration of the milieu where they found themselves.

On the other hand, we should avoid so yielding to the attraction of the subject as to consider exclusively the technique. It is only too easy to take two statues clothed in a similar manner and expressing a similar moral attitude, to show a relationship that, in this case, is only due to chance. Another pitfall had to be avoided. Certain statues of Rheims, for instance have an evident Mediterranean air that could have supported all too easily our exposition by demonstrating, not the spiritual relationship of Greek sculpture to French sculpture, but the influence that Greek sculpture, through the intermediation of the Roman models, was able to exercise on French art at a given moment and in circumstances that were otherwise exceptional. What we have attempted to show, at least to those who possess some notion of the language of sculpture and the history of the Greek and French societies in the course of the periods of their most original development, is the parallelism of the rhythms of the technical evolution of sculpture and the social and psychological evolution of sentiments and customs.

[2] Figs. 4 and 5 to 24 and 25.

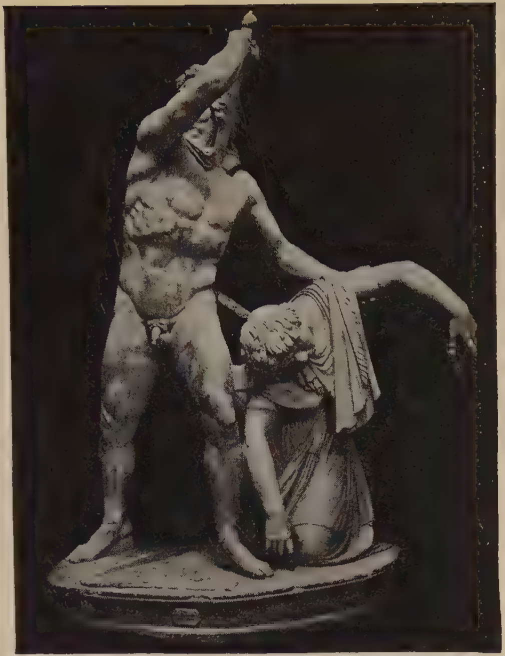

Fig. 24

Greece (II Century)

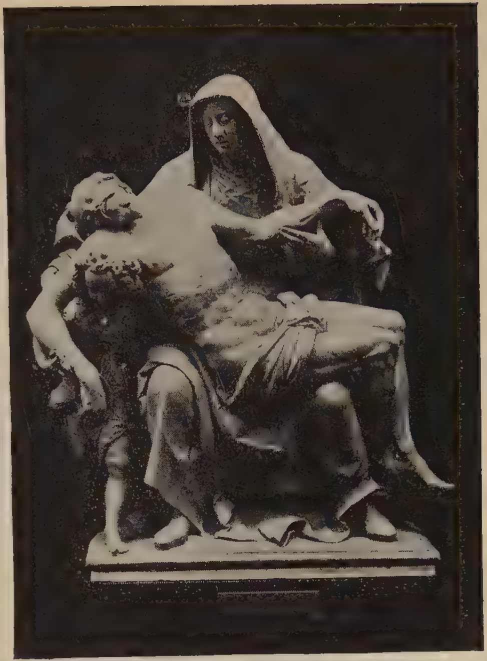

Fig. 25

France (XVI Century)

I am not following in detail the process of the radical dissolution, then the progressive integration, through which the ancient world disappeared in order that from its ruins might rise the Christian world. This happened, as it will happen in the future no doubt, in the same way that the constitution of a new chemical body borrows its elements from other chemical bodies in solution which happen to be in the region where its movement of synthesis establishes a center of attraction. The patient and fanatical activity of the Jewish apostles and the hundred, then the thousand, then the hundred thousand ingenuous disciples, sailors, peddlers, soldiers, loose women who went about affirming, through ports, markets, barracks, wretched dens, that nobility belonged, in this debased, skeptical, self-indulgent world to the poor, the sick, the slave—all this activity, prepared a new communion in the heart of individualistic anarchy, the despair of which stoic heroism had alone the power to support. It scarcely matters, at bottom, that the origins of each new communion differ from the origins of that which it comes to replace. The essential thing is that it should be. The prime movers concerned have always used the pretext of ideals to reclothe the mask, but it is in the illusion of these pretexts that these movers fructify. At almost the other extremity of Europe, in order to satisfy analogous needs perhaps, or in any case, other beliefs, Christianity took ten centuries to reconstitute society and the family which their own vigor and their own abuses appeared to have ruined forever. One communion that succeeds another in the diffused instinct of the species, resembles a love that succeeds another love in the heart of the individual. The critical phase that separates one love from another is abolished. The constructive phase opens. And as the first leads to the second because it is weary of reasoning, analyzing, amassing the materials of knowledge that are of no use to it, the second leads back to the first by gradually destroying its strength through the passionate and distracted use it has made of it. If the individual, or the species, is not capable of maintaining the state of love in his heart during his life, it suffices at least that he has known it once for him to desire to know it again, and History, like man, does not seem to have any reason for being save the search, the possession, the loss, and then the new search for this state.

When the first sculptors began to appear toward the end of the eleventh century, on the tympanums and capitals of the old Roman sanctuaries, a formidable society, all the elements of which were consolidated, was constituted anew. The liturgy is the symbol of this perfect organism. Theology shuts up in a doctrine as compact as stone the constitution of a family and a hierarchy from which not one piece could be subtracted without causing it to fall. An aristocracy that is brutal but completely cemented into the same block, props up the high walls with a solidity that comes from the obscure consciousness of the redoubtable risks it agrees to run. The universe has become an immense symbol of the moral world built up through ten centuries of meditation at the heart of the continuous drama. As ancient man summed up the poetic teachings in his faith, the new man unceasingly brings to it, in order to incorporate them in the strictest fashion, the poetic teachings of his faith.

If one goes from the rigid figures of Autun[1] or Moissac which express, like monotonous music, the symmetrical and precise rhythm of the social Catholic construction, to the ornamental profusion, the increasing individualism of the flamboyant agony in which the ogival church gradually disintegrates, one passes, toward the middle of the thirteenth century, through a point of equilibrium

[1] Fig. 190.

in which the statue, animated by another expression no doubt, observes, toward the entire theocratic order, relations similar to those that characterize its Greek sister, between the pediments of Olympia and the pediments of the Parthenon, in its relation to the city.

See the human statues of Rheims, Amiens, Notre Dame, the lateral portals of Chartres. There we have the same measured expression, the same harmony of proportions in the form, of disposition in the group, the same accord between the plane, the passage, and the outline, the same spontaneous and perfect fusion of the symbolic significance and the naturalistic perception of the object, the same grandiose sentiment in which sculpture is suspended between the intoxication of unbroken beliefs which have not yet entered the era of discussion, and the curiosity to live which tends to take possession of it. It is also the epoch in which the

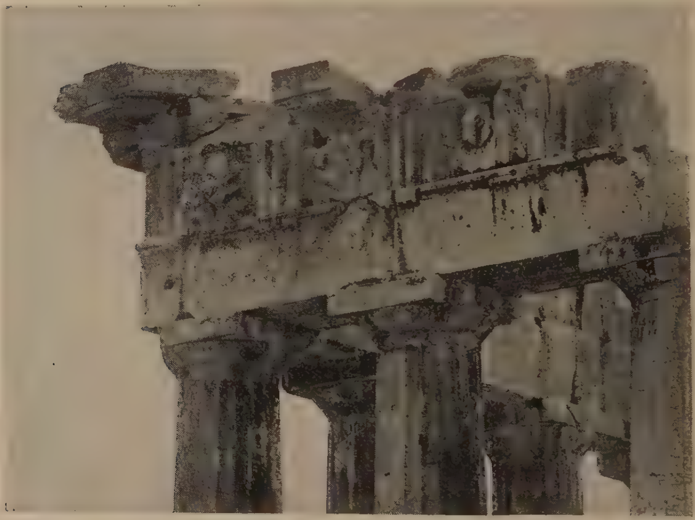

FIG. 26

THE PROFILE (The Parthenon)

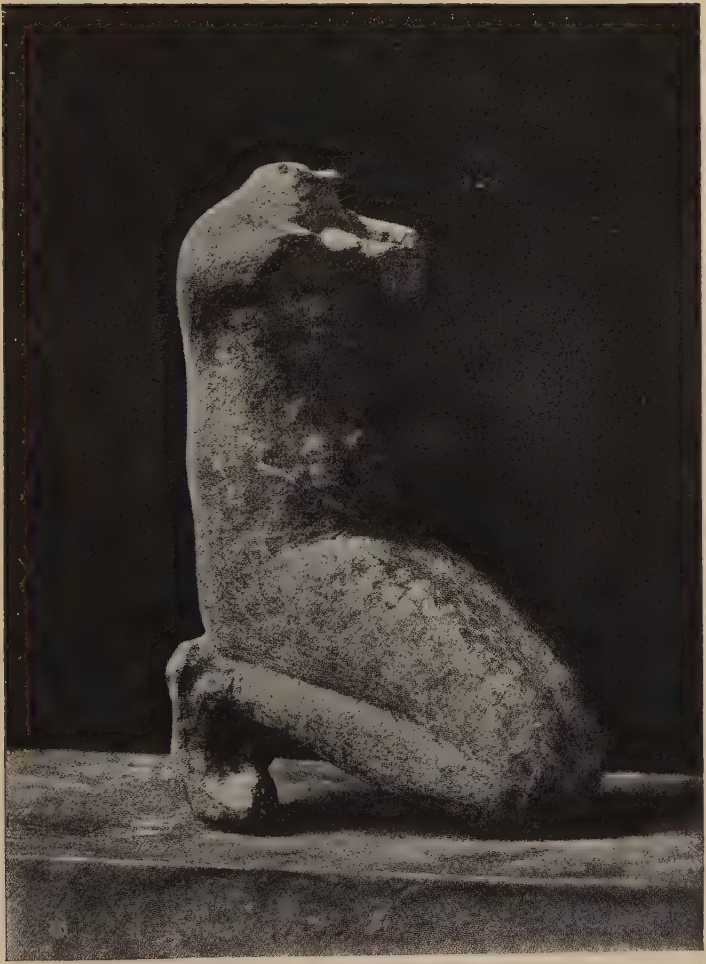

Fig. 27

The Plane (Egypt)

commune attains its maximum of creative virtue, thanks to the organic equilibrium of the corporative groups, in which Saint Thomas Aquinas seals the keystone of the vault of Catholic rationalism, in which the Crusade spreads, like an irresistible alluvion, the radiant security of the French genius. Enveloping with its unity, conquered and preserved through struggle, the necessary antagonism of the corporations and the clergy, of feudal right and popular stirrings, the architectural edifice of Christian conceptualism attains its point of consummation.

It was necessary to progress in order to construct it, through the pure, elongated statues of the central porches of Chartres, the cadenced rhythms of Saint-Trophime of Arles, the budding of the capitals from which the flower and the fruit do not yet emerge, all that folding together of the chrysalis, still wrapped in its sheath, through which we can glimpse the members that are to unfold, the wings that are to spread, the unnameable thrill that runs over the exquisite surfaces of the form in preparation, as if it were on the point of bursting forth. It was necessary for the military orders to bring about a respect for theological unity throughout all Europe in order that the continent should burst into flower, even if this very process was to destroy theological unity itself. It was necessary that the naissant commune should affirm, through insurrection, the right of the people and the crafts to introduce, into this growing unity, the living and poetic sentiment without which the chrysalis would have remained the formless larva imprisoned in the cocoon. It was necessary that in the bosom of the Church itself should be born, between Abelard and Saint Bernard, those first controversies that give to a hermetic society, along with life, movement, and flame, the illusion that it is strong enough to realize liberty without changing its form.

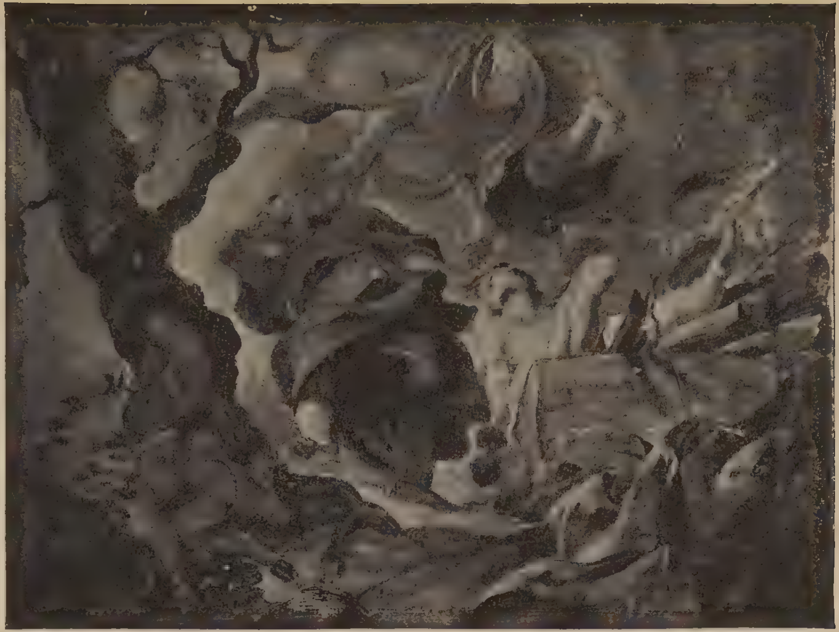

Fig. 28

The Passage (Rubens)

On the other slope of the evolution, we find the portraits, the tombs, the rapid and picturesque individualization of the setting. They constitute the intermediary stage between the hour when an anonymous chief architect built up—in the musical curves and the uninterrupted winding of the nerves and the rose-windows of Soissons—the Parthenon of the Middle Ages and the hour of the disintegration of the ogival nave that was to mark the decisive passage from a form of collective civilization to a form of individual civilization. The destruction of the Templars and the coming of the Jacquerie marked it in the social and political body, while in the bosom of the communes, at this same moment, the enriching of some at the expense of others, the corrosive action of luxury, the victorious reconquest of feudal tyranny or the organization of the monarchic unity caused the disintegration of the elements of the plastic edifice and broke the backbone and the skeleton of the vessel, the ruins of which the sculptors will strive to ornament, ransack, and torment.

IV

If the evolution of this organism of the image that sculpture represents, from the embryonic period to its decomposition, did not sink all its roots into the very history of the souls of men, it would have no meaning. The craft transmits itself, to be sure, perfects itself, affirms itself, complicates itself, becomes corrupt, and is lost. But the craft expresses man, and it is man, in the last analysis, who perfects, affirms, complicates himself, becomes corrupt, and is lost. The statue does nothing but imprint upon the soil the trace of man, as if it walked in his steps. It is man, the inner man, in his greatest candor but also in his most essential aspect. It is not, indeed, each man taken separately. It is a sublimation of man in general, of his secret life in its higher forms, the average spiritual residue which he leaves, so to speak, where he has passed.

If I have taken the statue as an example in Greece and France it is because, by keeping it in sight, we can better understand the bonds that attach us all, through it, to the forms of expression from which it emerges, which emerge from it, and at the center of which it remains, like a mute testimony of our diverse adventures. Those which precede it are those, precisely, which survive in it up to the instant when its appearance delineates those that will succeed it. If I may permit myself a definition that is no doubt a little schematic but made thus to enter the heart of the problem at a single stroke, I would say that sculpture being the plane,[1] architecture is the outline,[2] and painting the passage.[3] That the outline—architecture—corresponds to a social edifice very precisely defined. The passage—painting—to a wavering, progressive, regressive, subtle individual, penetrating into all social accidents with the shadow and the light. The plane—sculpture—has a point of equilibrium in which the individual attaches himself again strongly to the social body that nevertheless allows him to assume all independence compatible with their common security. That sculpture, the transitory plastic expression between an organic state and a critical state of society, participates less and less, in the measure that it approaches the point of equilibrium, architecture expressing this organic state, and painting, more and more, in the measure that it withdraws from the point of equilibrium, expressing this critical state.

If, in fact, after having envisaged the evolution of the statue in its relation to the evolution of customs, politics, ideas, I seek to understand what it expresses relative to the forms that precede and the forces that follow the instant when it attains its equilibrium, the signification of the temple and the painted canvas relative to man appears to me at the first glance. The Doric or Roman temple is embedded in all its parts in the rigidity of the social myth which it expresses. At its beginning, not a single piece of sculpture adorns it. It is as naked as the law.[1] It is the crowd to which the legist or the priest dictates the discipline necessary to the maintenance of the spirit in the frontiers outside of which the family and the city—or the family and the Church—run the risk of finding before them the intricacies of curiosity, inquiry, adventure in which they would lose themselves. When men believe in common, they build in common.

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[1] Fig. 27.

[2] Fig. 26.

[3] Fig. 28.

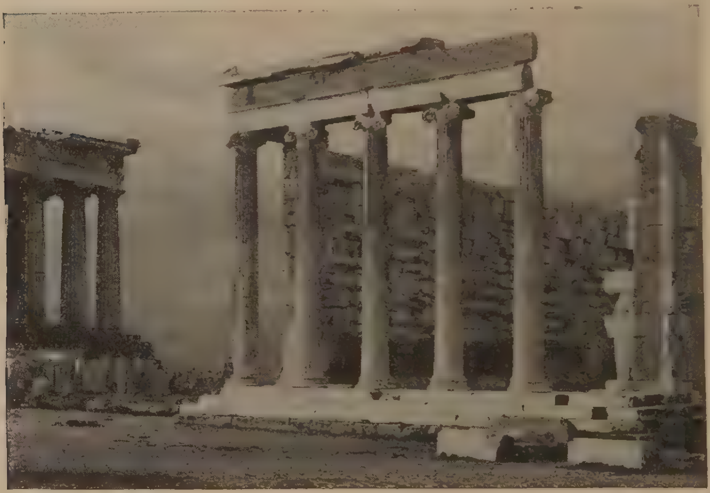

Fig. 29

Animation of Surfaces (Greece. The Erectheum)

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[1] Fig. 3.

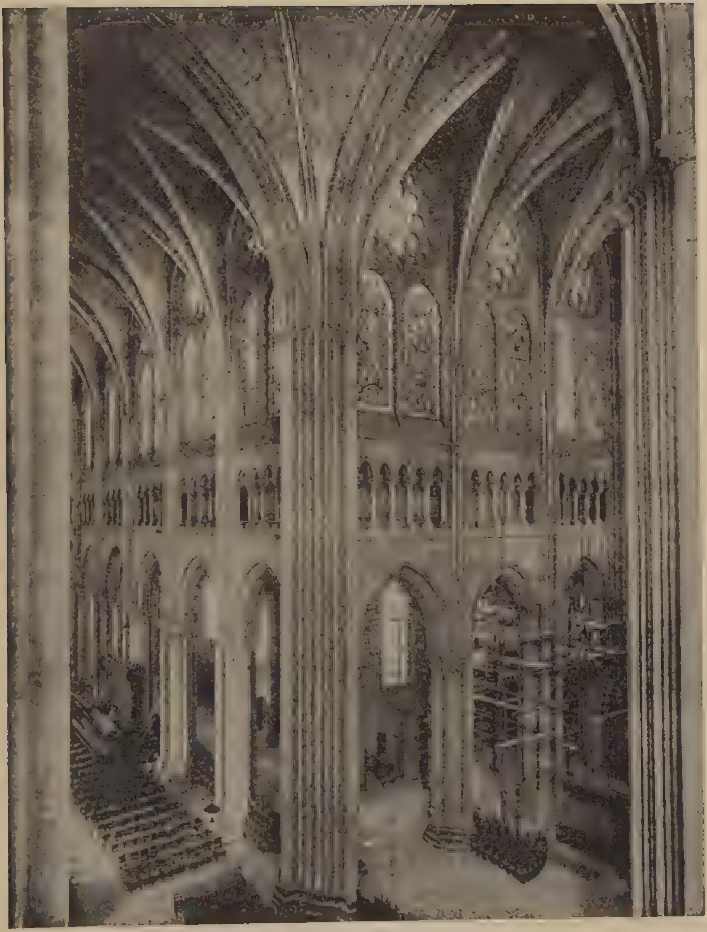

Fig. 30

Animation of Surfaces (France, Chartres)

If sculpture is born, it is because the individual is beginning to exist. It is the individual himself, but profoundly religious, rugged, obedient with a sort of intoxication, still entirely involved in the original organism. Men *believe* in common when sculpture appears. But already a few have begun to *think* no longer in common.

The statue emerges from the temple in almost the exact measure in which man emerges from the crowd, and at the same moment. It does not appear so long as man obeys blindly the theocratic powers charged with organizing the bases of his essential functions. It will not leave him so long as man cultivates his energy, his character and his audacity to the profit of the cohesion of the social group that but lately utilized him with the intransigence which this organization demanded. Man, disengaging himself from God, is in his heroic phase. Here it is the Crusade, there the national wars. At the very moment when the plane realizes for an hour the accord of the profile and the passage, we are present at the stammerings of primitive painting; architecture, meanwhile, showing an increased tendency to over-animate its surfaces and to associate itself with light by enlarging its bays and lightening its supports. This is dazzlingly clear in the revolution that substitutes for the massive Romanesque church the aerial ogival church that is gradually peopled with reliefs over which play shadow and light filling its interior, thanks to the multicolored stained glass windows, with flowery meadows, setting stars, illumined seas, and twilit woods—woods, where the mobile glimmering of the seasons casts moving shadows of blue vapor, green and red leaves, coral snow, and that are filled with the soughing of the wind, the warbling of birds, and imagined murmurs.[1] The Greek temple remains more uniform in the course of the rapid effort that leads sculpture from the roughest of archaisms to the melody of Phidias: it is because Christianity has not yet come to fill the soul of the multitudes with more confused, more complex sentiments, vaguer and more sensual mystic aspirations, a vaster accumulation of suffering and hope. Nevertheless, the columns of the peristyle grow more elongated and more frail, letting more daylight enter between them, the flow of the fluting is cut deeper and closer together, the curving grace of the Ionic[1]—soon to be followed by Corinthian profusion—substitutes itself more frequently for the trenchant austerity of the Doric, the metopes become peopled, the walls are covered with paintings, the gold of the suspended shields sparkles among the blues, the greens, the ochres and the vermilions, whose relations become more complex, an opening is contrived in the roof of the edifice so that the polychrome confusion of the idols and ex-votos may have full play in the interior.

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[1] Fig. 30.

If the myth and the law, at this critical hour, no longer had the strength to hold the individual, architecture would no longer have the strength to hold sculpture. After having invaded with its increasing multitudes, in Greece, the friezes, the cella and all the unoccupied space on the rock of the fortress, in France, through the trades, the saints, flowers, animals, the entire façade, and the lateral porches of the ogival edifice, the statue descends into the streets, apartments, gardens. It is like the individual who puts his trust in quantity, in the measure that he acquires equal rights to mask the inequality of his abilities, but whose social quality gradually drops. We have seen its irresistible modifications. The portrait appears. The type is effaced. The passage tries to insinuate into the plane

[1] Fig. 29.

which it invades, as against the profile which it destroys, sensations, sentiments, and ideas which the stone or the marble, even when fondled and caressed by the light, are not capable of expressing. As the statue-maker, at the price of ruin, appeals to the processes of painting—values, contrasts, half-tones—so painting develops and flings itself ahead of man, attempting, like a loving siren, to snatch him from the social ship that is going to perdition. It is in the fourth century that the great painters of Athens—Parrhasios, Zeuxis, Apelles—appear. It is in the fifteenth century, in the Occident, that painting, through the artists of Avignon, the Flemings, the Burgundians, the Italians, begins to escape from its primitive processes in order to attempt to realize an expression that is complete and self-sufficient from the deepest, the most complex, the subtlest nuances of the spirit. At this hour, in the Occident as in Greece, the great religious architecture is no longer anything but a memory.

When painting appears, there is no longer room for sculpture, except perhaps for the decoration of fountains and gardens. And the greatest architecture is dead beyond call. What architecture and sculpture try to say at this moment painting alone is able to say. And this because it is—in plastics, be it understood—the only language that suits the emancipated individual. It is the emancipated, or, to express it better, the expanded individual.[1] One makes the tour of the edifice. One makes the tour of the statue. If the great syntheses that all are able, if not to comprehend, at least to experience, the great continuous contours of the masses, tending to geometrical expression, cease to be the language of the sculptor and the architect, it is because they no longer represent the common beliefs that can

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[1] Fig. 31.

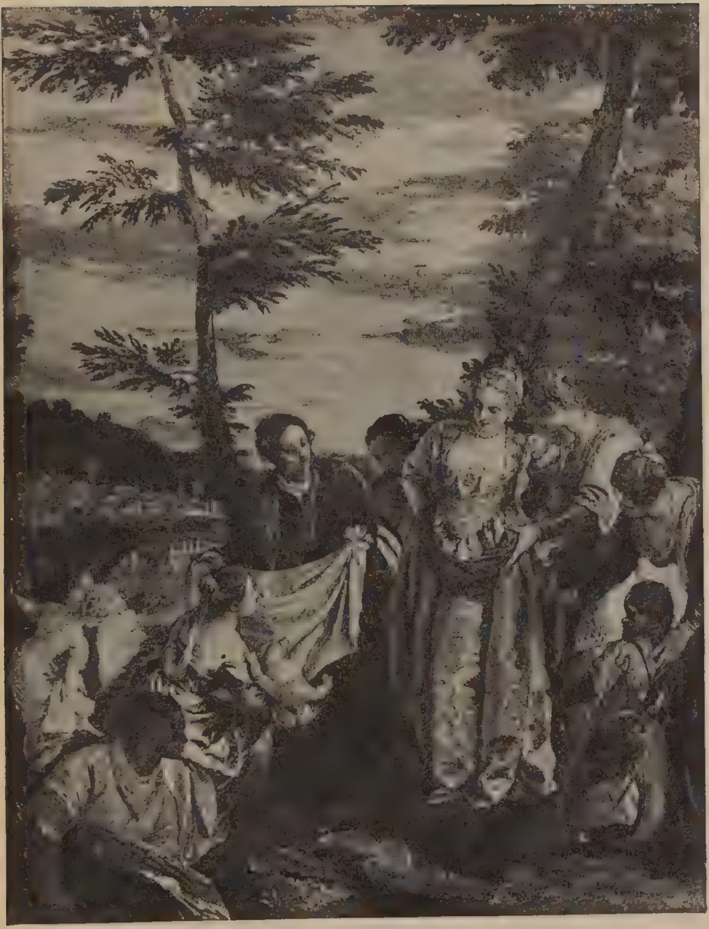

Fig. 31

Individualization of the Occidental (Veronese) be expressed only under their own unbroken, global, compact form, which is seized at a glance.

Painting is an entirely different thing. It is free. Its space is not real. It belongs to the spirit alone. Only the spirit can move in it, in every direction, in order to survey as it likes the masses and the arabesques on its surface and in its depth, to plunge the forms into the shadow, bring them out into the daylight, insinuate the daylight and the shadow into their most secret intervals, mask, proclaim, suggest as it likes the most complex and the simplest sentiments, the subtlest and the most energetic sensations, unchain together all the resources of its chromatic keyboard, extracting there a chord, touching here a note, creating the sea, creating the sky, veiling them in mist or clouds, making forests open or dense, speaking only of man or ignoring him completely. The painter is the religious or non-religious individual, cruel or tender, sensual or chaste, lyrical, story-telling, or dramatic, by turns or simultaneously;

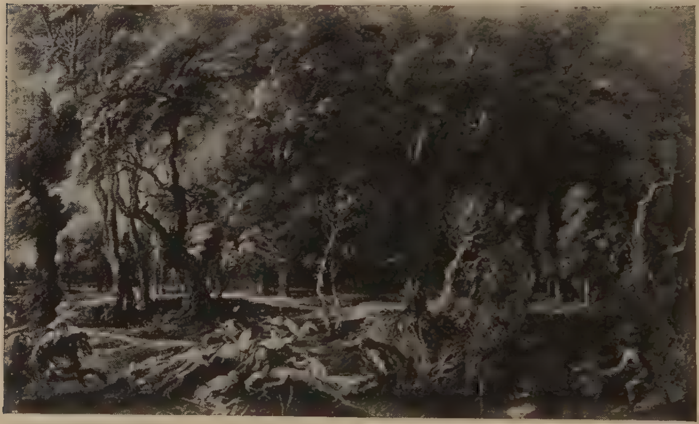

FIG. 32
SYMPHONIC PAINTING (Rubens)

he is free to be nothing but himself, to recreate for his own use a universe assured of being viable, however fantastic it may be, if only it is coherent and logical, even and more often especially, in spite of the decayed prejudices and superstitions of the crowd that emerge from the temple, as he does.

The decomposition of the organism, of which the crowd and he are elements that have been rendered independent, makes of the crowd merely an amorphous mass of elements without cohesion, lacking the cement of society and the myth. The individual alone can dispense with this cement since in his own heart he bears a myth and a society. In these redoubtable critical periods, in which almost all disoriented individuals wander in the arid solitudes of their spirit and no longer act save by their chance impulses or their habits, a few, and the painter in particular, carry on the heroism of the world. They have no other function than to recreate in their soul, in their own manner, the primitive unity, so as to transmit it intact to the organism that is to be. When the columns of the temple collapse the function of the painter-hero is to present his two shoulders for the burden of the architrave, until another approaches and permits him to die.

V

Let us examine more closely this powerful hold that painting exercises over strongly individualized times. Let us place ourselves immediately in the heart of the sixteenth century, when the masters of Venice seem to give the formula by which European painters will live for three hundred years. There, if one compares it with contemporary manifestations in the Orient or with those of the preceding century in Italy as well as in France, Flanders, or Germany, it already shows an evident symphonic character—to use, for the sake of a better understanding, the language of music.

Giorgione, Titian, Tintoretto, Veronese, preceding the musicians by two centuries, unite, in the painted work, all the elements that make it a world of complete expression. They do so for the first time in the modern world—for this, no doubt, was the less complicated task of Parrhasios among the ancients.[1] Space is conquered. Its laughter, and its peace, and its dramas, all its aspects enter into the moving form, in order to mold it by the play of reflections that mingle it with the light. No longer does anything stand separate from other things. An immense visual orchestra, through a permanent exchange of calls, echoes, values, entangled passages, attunes the storm that rises against the horizon to the nipple of a breast caressed by the shadow of a tree, adds to the death-scene of the day an amber necklace warmed by the skin that is inundated with blood, and makes the silhouette of a flower tremble in a rivulet, with the silver fringe of a cloud.

When this has come to pass, the series of forms gives to this universal, dancing movement of colored atoms that speak to each other and recognize each other, the profound reality of a lasting world, by means of the arabesque undulating about an invisible center, through all the dimensions of the imaginary space in which the spirit of the painter moves. Up to Giorgione and Titian, in spite of the effort of Masaccio,[2] painting remained melodic. As the singer unrolls his sonorous curve in a succession of sounds throughout time, the painter arranges in space his juxtaposed colors. The individual, in whom the elements of the social style in dissolution were placed beside one another before becoming a function of one another, advanced step by step toward his proper unity, which he was not bound to formulate save on the day when he had the audacity and the genius to organize these scattered elements in himself. When the social organism is complete, every man carries his part. When it is broken down, a few sing for all.

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[1] "He carries off the palm," says Pliny, "for those last touches that terminate and complete objects." This is perhaps the definition of value and the half-tone.

[2] Fig. 138.

The glory of Italy, in the modern world, is to have given birth to the first beings sufficiently strong to play this rôle. This explains also why as a country it was the first and the most quickly extinguished. Overwhelmed by his passions, the individual develops himself but wears himself out more rapidly than elsewhere.

The great individual symphony naturally appeared in the country that was already affirming itself, in Europe, as the most individualized since the epoch when the French cathedrals expressed the Christian equilibrium at its most moving hour. Before the middle of the twelfth century, Arnaldo da Brescia proclaimed the Republic in the city of the papacy. When the first university—that of Paris—appeared outside Italy, that of Bologna had existed some fifty years. And it was law that was taught there, and not theology. In the thirteenth century, the Italian church had already lost its primitive purity. While the Commune of the North of France drew the best advantage it could from the invention of the ogive, inviting the masses which were already escaping from the Roman theocracy to build its social poem, the Italian cities were substituting more or less everywhere the municipal palace for the religious edifice. The fierce crenelated walls rose upon the naked flagstones, testifying to a particularism that accentuated itself from day to day. The individual grew up in the midst of street quarrels, nourished on envy and fury. Since that time when the image-maker and the painter labored in France, rubbing elbows in the same workshop, when no personal poem of lyricism or thought dreamed of assembling in itself the multitudinous unity of the cathedral, Francis of Assisi and Thomas Aquinas, and presently Dante, Giotto,[1] Duccio, Simone Martini, the brothers Lorenzetti[2] summed up in words, formulas, or paintings of an admirable synthetic force, the most conscious and the noblest things to which the Christian idea was able to give birth in heads and in hearts. The symphonists of Venice could be born when da Vinci, Michael Angelo, Raphael, completing the effort of the Tuscan melodists Angelico, Ghirlandajo, Lippi, Signorelli, Piero della Francesca[3] had cast into the mold of their spiritual energy the Italian form that had reached its most implacable reality: Italian individualism held so advanced a position that it preceded by an entire century all the Occidentals who tried to express the highest sentiments and the vastest sensations that symphonic painting has ever tried to grasp. From the middle of the sixteenth century, in fact, the social body died in Italy, while in the Occident, thanks to the religious wars, the moral energy maintained in the struggling creeds a spiritual cohesion which the social force had not yet deserted. When this moral energy gives way, when the individual thinks of the interests of his purse more than of the interests of his faith, the harmonies of Velasquez assemble, about the face of a child, the most secret things that wander in Spanish space, a space which the silver of the mirages and the roses of the twilights fill with the stir of flowers. Elsewhere, the gigantic orchestra of Rubens organizes into its tumultuous harmonies, the blood and the fatness of Flanders, together with the trees and the waters contorted by its illumined mist. Elsewhere again one sees

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[1] Figs. 81, 158.

[2] Fig. 94.

[3] Figs. 92, 142.

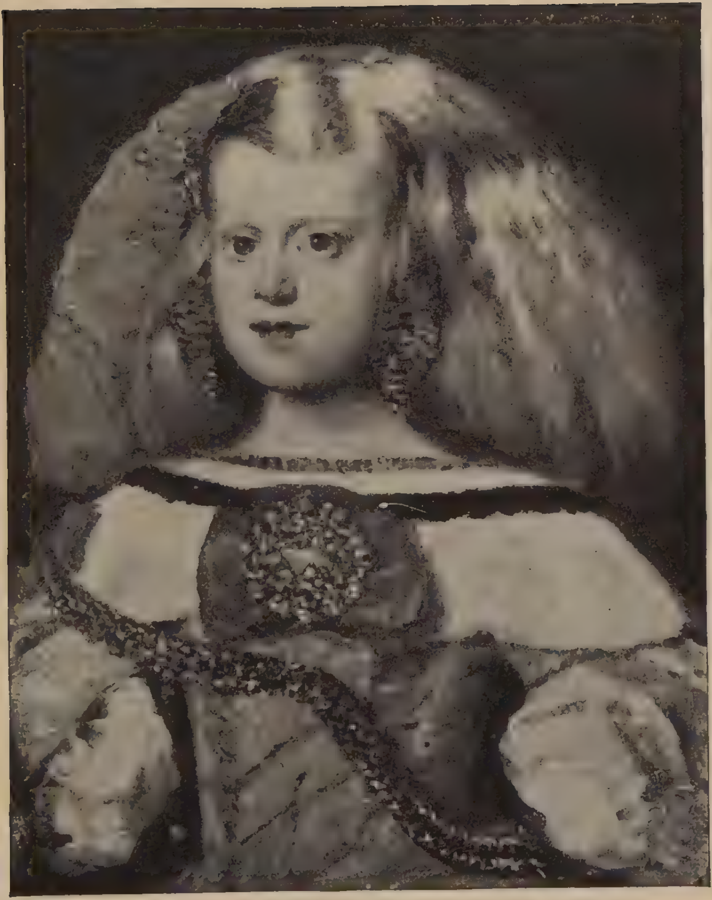

Fig. 33

Harmony (Velasquez)

Rembrandt loading his canvas with the gold of glowing stuffs and the fire of the tropics in order to caress the brow of a poor man or illuminate a cradle.[1]

It is then neither in the Renaissance, nor in the Reformation, nor in the Revolution, no doubt destined to rend mediæval society asunder finally and deliver to all men the means to separate themselves from one another in order to liberate the elements of the remodeled social body that, to my mind, resides the great event of the modern European world. It appears in this apparition of a new symphonic spirit sketched by the Venetians, introduced by Rubens, by Rembrandt, by Velasquez into the sensuality of Europe, by Spinoza and Leibnitz into its thought, by Newton and Lamarck into its science and by German music into its sentiment. The individual realized by the great painters of the seventeenth century was, upon his encounter with pessimism, to seek beyond it that pantheistic annihilation which is only a first step toward a new fusion of the elements scattered in the great common mold. The plastic symphony finally touches the limits of space everywhere; it can no longer emerge from it and move in its own sphere—an immense one but limited by the eyes. The intercrossed echoes of this sphere end by assuming a hollow and monotonous accent, and the plastic symphony will reach out toward music, which can construct an imaginary world liberated from every object and capable of carrying all hearts, beyond the visible world, to the infinite domain of the organizing illusion, where appears the spectacle of a will victorious over the abyss. When great painting tends to suggest the symphony of sound, it must give way to that symphony if it does not wish to die. It is very moving to realize that Keiser, Handel, Sebastian Bach were born a few years after the death of Velasquez and Rembrandt.

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[1] Figs. 32, 33, 58.

The poem of sound fills houses, gardens, streets, woods, villages, the ships on the waters, the places of worship and pleasure. It is endowed with a power of sensual solicitation which painting does not know. One must take some trouble to see painting, consent to open one's eyes and, especially, to reflect. The ear, on the contrary, even when one's attention wanders, is captivated by rhythm, the more so as this rhythm prolongs in time the relations, the accords, the passages that painting establishes in space alone. The poem of sound exercises over instinct a more insistent, more durable, more profound activity which, even if one resists, tears one away from one's thoughts. It is the fourth voice of man, which comes when men are separated to such a point from one another that, even when they ignore—even when they deny the fact, they tend to draw nearer to one another. It no longer expresses man at the summit of himself, but man allowing that summit to be assailed by murmurs, cries, complaints of other men, and the forgotten universe. Social pantheism does not possess any means of action more powerful than music. When music arises, architecture is not far away.

In the modern world, it is not difficult to see that it appears as the supreme instrument of integration, at the hour when painting, still too intellectual—although no doubt the very peak of the constructive intelligence—proves powerless to express the vague rebirth of the most intimate, the most diffuse and the most irresistible among all the social instincts. When Italian music arrives, great painting dies. And here once more it is under the form of the melodic arabesque that music offers a remedy for the almost complete general anarchy, so true it is that its hour has not come, since the plastic symphony is at this moment unfolding all its resources in the non-Italian Occident. The great melodist Monteverde is the contemporary of the great symphonist Rubens, and he is the first modern musician, for Palestrina prolonged the Gothic world at the very hour when Tintoretto was advancing with great strides into the era of the individual.

It is to the Germany of the eighteenth century where, after two hundred years of revolutions and wars, the social body is most divided, the individual most dispersed, least defined, most unhappy, that it is reserved to throw into confusion the plastic relations by plucking the sentimental relations from their disorder and orienting the world toward a new organism discarding the symphonies of the objective intelligence in order to unite the sole forces of hope and will. This was its function at the moment. This was also its historic mission. The master-singers were already building a sonorous, diffused, gregarious, organic cathedral at the hour when the master-masons in France were finishing the same labor, with stone, plumb-line, and glass. It is the rôle of music itself, which from remotest antiquity, has brought the nomad and the savage together to intone the chant of law. It is the rôle of the Orphic or Homeric *Ædes*, restoring the moral ruins of primitive Hellenism, that were scattered through the isles by the invasion of the Dorians. It is the rôle of plain-song which in primitive Catholicism where the individual still remained completely invisible, preceded by several centuries the architectural synthesis of the Occident. Whereas the painter-hero bears the multitude in himself, the musician-hero gathers it around him.

VI

However, I know exceptions—in the Helleno-Latin world and even in France—to the phenomenon of the rhythmic alternation that masks the evolution of art, and consequently of the spirit, and consequently of history. Among such exceptions are the utilitarian architecture of the Romans, the French civil architecture of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both appearing on an unsettled social terrain at the moment when the myth had left men's hearts and the individual was trying to find himself amid the desert of his powers.

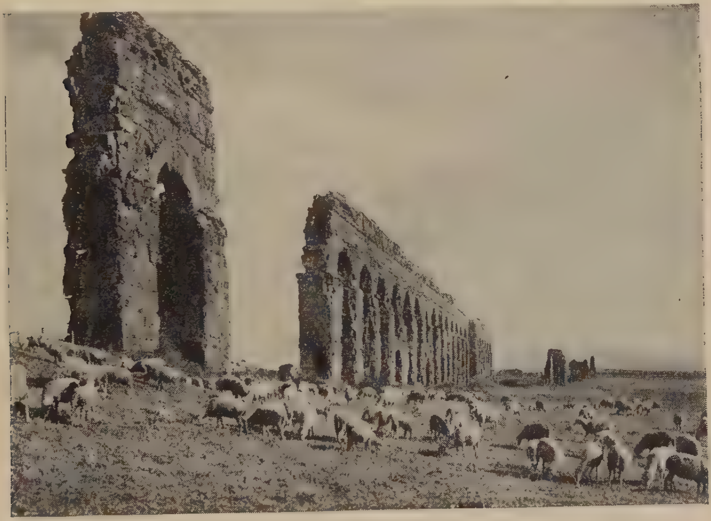

Fig. 34
Utilitarian Architecture (Rome)

When the great architecture of Rome appeared, the primitive religion had involved the aristocracy in its downfall, and in order to hold in check the common people, at every moment increased in number, stirred up, refreshed through the flowing back into Rome of antagonistic races, cults, systems and interests, a convulsive tyranny had replaced the granite mold in which the republican constitution had shut up the individual. Now, in the entire history of building, nothing is purer, nothing is harder, nothing is more categorical than these naked walls that suspend in space tiers, arches, and vaults, and spread, to the confines of the known world, the legalistic and order-bestowing spirit of the Romans. But there, precisely, is the key of the mystery. With the Roman myth dead and all the ancient civilizations entering the Latin city at the very hour when their own myths were also dying or confusedly outlining themselves in the bosom of an immense moral anarchy, a powerful political organism sprang up as best it could, alone knowing its object in the universal chaos, and alone dowered with an organizing science capable of remedying the absence of the social bond. Everywhere administration replaced religion. The moral law, in giving way, left the field free for the civil law. An era of expectation opened, in which the artificial armature imposed by the conqueror came to weld the spiritual fragments of a great amorphous body and, by revealing the common needs, prepared for the unfolding of a common confession.

It is under the Antonines that the statute of the Roman provinces attains its most robust organization and the Law assumes the character of the most solid civil monument of antiquity. But it is also under the Antonines that the most finished and the most imposing constructions of Rome rise up more or less everywhere, august masses, continuous curves, gigantic ramparts, dense matter, vertical weights, permitting the lightness and the audacities of structure which iron alone has since been able to attain, an order imposed by the intransigent formula of the legist and the engineer.[1] Utilitarian constructions responding to vulgar needs, as the written law imposed by force, in default of faith, responds to vulgar needs. But because they respond closely, without an error, without an oversight, without

[1] Figs. 34, 127, 213.

an omission, they satisfy at the same time the spiritual needs that unite, through the intermediation of number, the most moving harmonies which the myth has inspired.

This was an expectant system, an arch thrown between two worlds, firm and bold as only an arch can be, because having a river to cross, it has no choice between several solutions. And perhaps we ourselves are present at an analogous phenomenon—in our epoch which recalls this other epoch in so many respects—in the dissolution, the interpenetration of myths, the flowing of races and peoples into one another, the universal ascent of the poor, and the vague outlines of a new mysticism. Perhaps, in the universal anarchy, when religious architecture has disappeared and civil architecture has gone astray, industrial architecture[1] is also the arch thrown between two worlds, substituting the activity of the scientific mentor for the activity of the decayed social myth, as the administrative and juridical

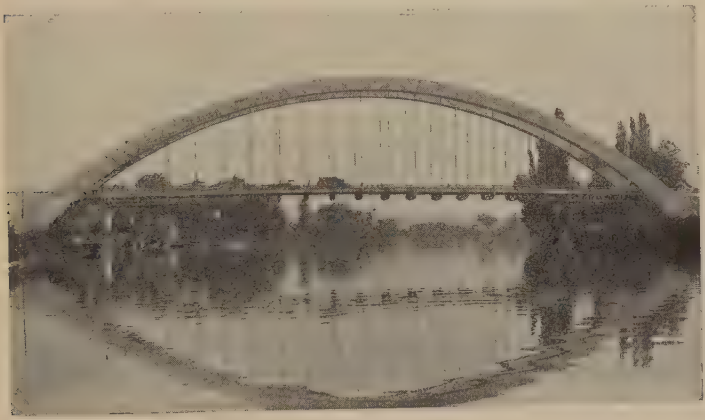

FIG. 35

UTILITARIAN ARCHITECTURE (France, Saint-Pierre-du-Vauvray) mentor formerly built, upon the ruins of this myth, his pitiless armature. Perhaps this modern mentor has been imagined not only to supply the place of the social myth in the measure in which he assures the material needs of man, but also to satisfy, as the Roman mentor once did, those common needs and interests susceptible of leading man on into common beliefs.

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[1] Figs. 35, 71, 215, 218.

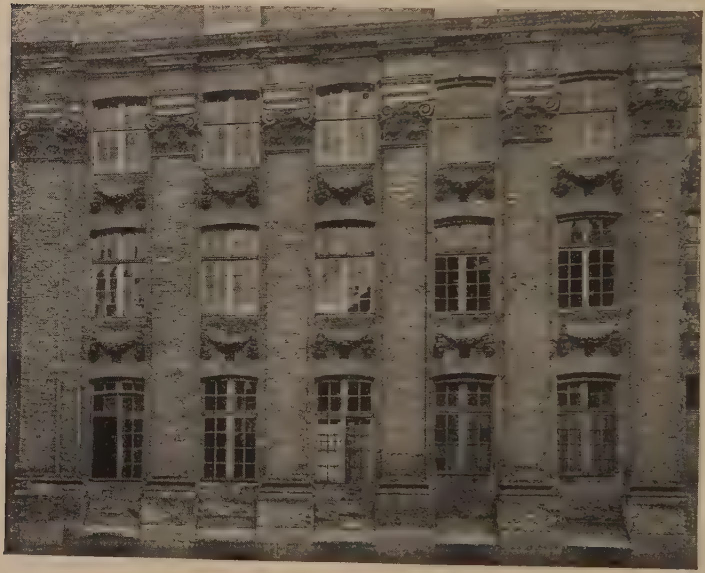

Fig. 36

Rationalist Architecture (France, xvii Century)

We ourselves scarcely suspect what the Catholic edifice owes to the order-bestowing and regulating spirit of the Romans. Do we know what the spiritual organism, whose approach we anticipate, will owe to the continuous teachings of the factory and the machine, of the airplane, the ship, the automobile, the only modern monuments that resemble the constructions of the Roman engineers through their strict adaptation to the exact ends expected of them, through their trenchant precision, the beauty of their proportions, their powerful lightness, and their aspect as of living monsters? Like the Roman constructions, utilitarian and only utilitarian, do they not offer us like them the geometrical shelter in which we can taste the intoxication of a reality—and perhaps of a belief—in process of becoming?

It is not altogether to the same causes that classic French architecture has owed its appearance. If the social myth, shaken by the Renaissance, had lost the ardent ingenuity from which sprang the ogival art once the monarchy was realized it maintained, through the political and religious institutions, an equilibrium sufficient to prevent the individual from escaping from their grasp. The genius of France is, first of all, architectural. But it tends to express its genius quite as well in its painting, its philosophy, its literature, as in its buildings and its gardens. It introduces it into politics through its constant anxiety to realize the State. It has attempted, through its resistance to Protestantism, to maintain it in religion.

At the same time as Descartes, and at the hour when the Venetian plastic polyphony was assuming its "freedom of the city" in Europe through Rubens, through Rembrandt, and through Velasquez, Poussin[1] was somewhat neglecting the full range of his abilities in order to express monumental rhythms in painting. For one hundred and fifty years, France, bewildered by the sudden rise of Italy, was searching for the powerful faculty that had once permitted it to write, during almost four centuries, the loftiest poem in stone of the Occident. It had attempted a hybrid architecture in which the profuse anemia of the Gothic decoration destroyed the Italian profile, itself already considerably

[1] Fig. 147.

compromised by the press of individualism that at the same epoch substituted, in the peninsula, the great symphonic painting for the trenchant simplicity of the building. It had not yet assimilated, or even truly considered this great painting, preserving as it did in its corporations and its religious struggles, enough enthusiasm and social passion to conserve the anguished desire for architecture, but possessing already individuals sufficiently well defined to prevent it from coming to a head.

The double influence of the monarchy and of Cartesianism came in time to prevent this growth of individuality through centralization in the field of politics and method in the field of theory. It retarded the final dissociation by substituting for the abolished collective mysticism an intellectual construction, ingenious but hardly durable for reason was to end only too quickly in rationalism, as faith, in other days, ended in dogmatism. In spite of all, the check functioned with a power unique in the history of the spirit. After the Romanesque, after the Gothic, came a third complete order.[1] Bare pilasters, alternating regularly with the rectangular, vertical, and horizontal windows, restoring, through their rhythmic and measured play, the civil edifice to the scale of the intelligence, were to substitute for nearly two centuries, to the delight of practical reason, the rectilinear deductions of the highest culture for the symmetrical axioms of the highest theology and for the radiant intuitions of the highest equilibrium that ever existed between the popular fervor and the social system. Gardens, roads, bridges, tragedy, comedy, music, morality, sculpture, painting, all obey at the same time this need for the subordination of the sensibilities and the passions to the cadences of the will.

A kind of semi-anonymity prevails, giving to this time a little of the character of those in which the individual is completely effaced. The statues in the alleys, the basins of the fountains of Versailles, the colonnades, the trees, the architecture of the fountains appear, at first sight, to be from the same hand. A cold but severe and magnanimous unity, whose elements lack prominence and accent, prevents us from distinguishing these elements of the ensemble, or from imagining that they can express the aspirations, the anxieties, the torments of a single spirit. In the Alexandrine, one finds the three unities, the entire bureaucratic organization, the academies, the school of Rome, the same impersonality. If ecclesiastical architecture repels Calvinism, Jansenism represents, in the bosom of the Church, a constructive moral reaction against the psychological dissociation which the Jesuit pursues. No one at this time takes La Fontaine seriously. Pascal is shocking. The Le Nains are ignored. This whole order leads France, and the world behind it,—staggering a little, attenuating from day to day the walls, the

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[1] Fig. 36.

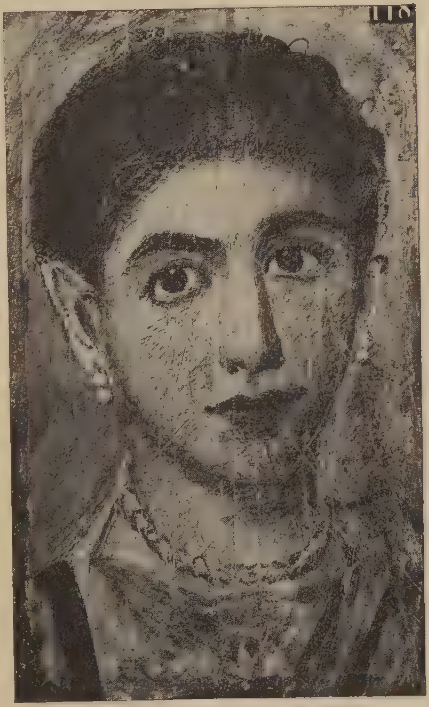

FIG. 37

INDIVIDUALIZATION OF EGYPT
(Greek Period)

supports, the theme, the idea, the word, and by the natural bent of a pitiless logic,—to the Revolution. But when the sentimentalism of Rousseau has broken Cartesianism, when the individualism of Voltaire has broken the corporation, there is no longer a single force, either social or spiritual, capable of constraining and containing the individual. He throws himself into the integral discovery of himself, with a fury the less dissimulated because, in spite of the half-Flemish Watteau,[1] he is almost three hundred years behind the painters of Venice, almost two hundred years behind the painters of the Low Countries or Spain, almost one hundred years behind the German musicians. With a splendid intoxication and at a single stroke, Romantic painting in France realizes the individual symphony[2] and new elements of drama, of the picturesque, of emotion. But it is to the detriment of architecture, the glory and sustenance of this country for eight centuries, which also gives way at a single stroke. A double and grandiose catastrophe leading the social body in an inverse march to the bottom of the abyss and leading the chosen individual to the summit of the spirit. In fact, we perceive here the disorganization which the emancipation of man inflicted on society by breaking the organism that architecture expresses, and also the oppression this organism inflicted upon man by forbidding him access to the miraculous unity which polyphony alone could win for him. . . . I know no more striking testimony to the power and the cruelty of the myth, and at the same time to the solitary grandeur and the powerlessness of the hero.

VII

Now, outside the ancient European world, outside Christian civilization, were things happening the same way? Does one see everywhere, as one has seen it in Greece, in France, in Italy, in Occidental Europe in general, the man-statue emerging from the society-architecture in order to define itself through painting and tending, through the intoxication of music, to re-create the social spirit and the edifice destined to shelter this spirit?

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[1] Fig. 57. [2] Fig. 157.

The Oriental civilizations are not easily penetrable by us. The block, at first, is closed. When we insinuate ourselves into it, the immense network of popular polytheism and philosophic pantheism forbids us to advance there. A troubled atmosphere surrounds it, enervates it, like the breath of flowery marshes from which fever rises, almost unbreathable by us, who love distinct contours, light air, clear waters. The rapid evolution of the civilizations of Europe, born, ripening, declining in the course of a period that does not exceed four or five centuries—sometimes one or two, as in Spain or in Holland—has ill prepared us to comprehend these motionless metaphysical monuments to which legend accords sometimes ten thousand years of existence, for which History has not been able to fix a beginning.

At first, for example, if one places oneself at a little distance in order to embrace the ensemble, neither religion, nor philosophy, nor the social organization of Egypt, China, India, appear to have changed sensibly since time immemorial. During five thousand years we know only one religion, which is moreover esoteric, in Egypt. India returns to Brahmanism after having created Buddhism, then absorbed it in the mystical flood that ascends unceasingly from the sensual depths of its imagination. China, which at first welcomes Buddhism, employs its long, somnolent, and grim patience in recovering gradually the thousand little practices of its utilitarian fetishism. Islam suppresses almost suddenly the manifestations of its spiritual activity rather than change one fragment of its social system. It is necessary to accept or reject these gigantesque constructions *en bloc.*

It is their massive character that first introduces us into the intimate reality of their creative genius. The spirit of architecture dominates it. Or rather, form is scarcely conceived outside the building. Even if the structure is devoid of a major plastic value, as in India, sculpture and painting appear in it only as detached debris.[1] But if the building is bare, as in China, sculpture, although isolated, shows its relation with it by preserving its architectonic appearance even in the most bristling heraldic monsters. Even if, as in Islam, there is neither sculpture nor painting apart from architecture, one sees ornament ending in a geometrical formula that does not permit to the decorator any excursion into life.[2] If the great alternative rhythm exists in these amorphous organisms, it will only be in a rudimentary way, rising and descending from century to century or even from millennium to millennium, like a tide that does not sensibly change the general aspect of the sea and in no respect alters the mass. Even when one cannot trace it there distinctly, a fact subsists: since religion, morality, and the social bond remain intact, nothing emerges completely from the architectonic sphere in the interior of which the spirit consents to move.

We know too little about the history of Egypt to work out from it these alternating periods. Sometimes we think we grasp them. But the chronology deceives us. This statue which we imagine to be later than this other which is more archaic in aspect, is on the contrary earlier by a thousand or two thousand years. The uniformity of Egyptian statuary is only apparent. A series of fluxes and refluxes gullies the surface. But their depth escapes us, and their significance. For we are almost completely ignorant of the variations of the doctrine, and of the social movements to which these variations respond, their echoes in literature, morality,

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[1] Fig. 131. [2] Fig. 114.

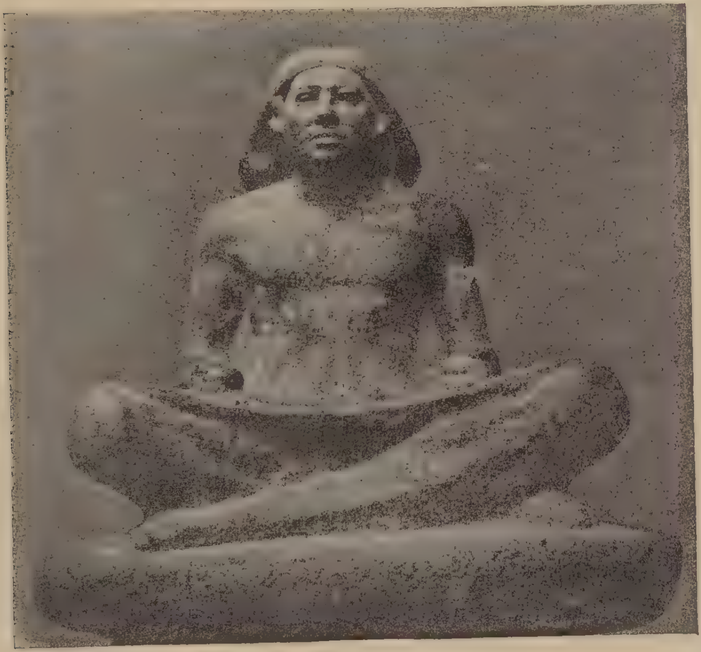

Fig. 38

Musical Sculpture (Egypt)

customs. Nevertheless, a few phenomena identical with those that mask everywhere the decomposition of the social body appeared toward the decline of the culture of Egypt. And they are significant. Thus, from the Saïte epoch, when the individual portrait became common—the statue still preserving its architectonic air[1]—no more temples were built. Thus, the Greco-Roman epoch saw the spirit of mass and cohesion crumble in the statue and even in the portrait—the spirit in which Egypt had defined itself during fifty centuries—to a point where the sphinx and the gods contemporaneous with the Ptolemys had completely forgotten their religious or symbolic character and constituted an industry of household goods of the poorest quality.

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[1] Fig. 173.

Thus the Christian epoch coincided with the appearance of these painted portraits[1] in which the inner life blazes out, hallucinating, musical, radiant, and at the same time concentrated, an immense afflux of simple souls invaded by faith. The passage of the Egyptian organism into the Christian organism experienced the poignant crises undergone by all Hellenism at the same epoch, in the course of which it seemed that the social world was ruined forever and the individual was set aimlessly adrift, the great architecture and the great sculpture no longer being even a memory.

As long as the Egyptian social edifice endures, in any case, that is to say up to Rameses III, Egyptian art did not even conceive the individual as independent of this edifice, and if we ourselves attempt to conceive its statuary as independent of its architecture, we do not comprehend it. Not that it pretends to associate it with construction. On the contrary, it separates from it more distinctly than in Greece. It leaves naked its hermetic temples, shutting up in their closest shadow some mummy of a crocodile, some statuette of a hawk. But during four or five thousand years, the statue does not emerge from the geometrical principle that presides at the arrangement of hydraulic works, at the building of the pyramids, the temple porches, the gigantesque colonnades imposing the genius of man on the monotonous universe.

This is still more impressive, more significant, than

[1] Fig. 37.

the progressive emergence of the statue out of the sanctuary that marks the plastic epopee of Europe. Egyptian society is so hierarchized, so strictly imbricated in the political organism, massive as those blocks of basalt supported for eternity by their weight alone in the hypostyle halls, that it leaves the individual free to dream as he likes within the absolute limits which it traces for him on all sides. Thus the engineer of the country digs the reservoirs and the canals outside which the water of the Nile cannot spread, thus nature herself sets, by the line of the alluvion, an implacable separation between the nourishing earth which the dampness penetrates and the unfertile earth which the sun sterilizes. The Egyptian statue[1] moves in the interior of its own frontiers outside of which begins the reign of fiery space. It is a form in itself, a microcosm. It has no reason for being, if it is not conceived geometrically, according to the plan of the visible universe that begins where it ends.

The age-old immutability of the laws that cause wheat to grow explains here in the most certain fashion the immutability of the soul. The individual depends upon it to such a point that his profound instinct forbids him to go beyond the geometrical form which the regularity of natural phenomena imposes on his relations with the political order and which cadences, in its grandiose monotony, the rhythm of his spirit. If his energy and his curiosity give way, the academic formula will intervene in order to maintain them notwithstanding in the frame fixed by nature and law. If they abandon him altogether he will give way to men bringing from outside into this absolute immobility of the banks of life, the revolutionary mobility of their passions. And, remaining the same at bottom, the individual will let his temples crumble while he continues to sow, watch things grow, and gather the wheat at the same periods, from the beginning to the end of time.

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[1] Figs. 27, 38, 173, 175, 197.

There is the Egyptian mystery. The individual appears there furtively, is indicated with an exquisite and sometimes cunning finesse in the painting of the tombs in which all the regular, busy, humble, and healthy life of the boatman, the shepherd, the farmer, the miller stands out on the high walls in features as subtle as the poetry of dawn in the country, the trembling of the waters, the beating of wings, the uninterrupted warbling of birds, as the calyxes of flowers opening to the dew, as the singing of oarsmen, the quivering of grasses, or as precious stones clear and trembling on all sides.[1] But he never emerges from it, any more than the astronomical universe itself, any more than the caste that maintains him, in law and myth, discipline and instruction. Its slow, limited evolution is accomplished exclusively within the great architectonic rhythm.

One sees, in the very mass of the cube of basalt, diorite or granite, the limbs of the statue unloosening a little, becoming rounded, tapering off, the features of the face allowing the imprisoned flame to filter through, and its spirit requiring the undulating planes that limit it to insist only a little here, to escape furtively there, to prolong, through a miracle of the associated plastic and poetic sentiments, their uninterrupted modulations up to the secret limits of an interior space which the light from without embraces on all the surfaces in order to unite solidly with it.[2]

Since the sculptor cannot emerge from the necessary myth and the visible world, the invisible world belongs to him. Within the impassable limits of the image, he can subtilize, caress, modulate its mass to infinity in order to prolong it everywhere over the continuous wave

[1] Fig. 90. [2] Fig. 38.

of a mute harmony. A unique miracle. The intentions of painting take the directions of music by means of sculpture which, on all sides, is blocked out in the impeccable profiles of construction. The individual symphony is accomplished silently in the statue itself while the painting of the tombs nowhere oversteps the bounds of the melody. One would say that Egypt wishes to signify in this way to future times that everything can be expressed between the rigid frontiers of the most intransigent myth, on condition that it does not substitute the individualistic principle for the individual reality, but also that it does not sacrifice this same reality to the social principle. Individualism, it is true, momentarily takes its revenge in teaching Egypt that an organism, however logical and formidable it may be, perishes within its own frontiers if it does not appeal some day to the individual passions in order thus to surprise the constitutive elements and prepare their future combination in a different order.

In India, the spectacle, at first very remote from the former, offers, if one considers it closely, singular analogies to it. There is no geometry here. It is all a confused organism, budding with succulent plants unequal in height, form, distribution upon some poisoned marsh. And yet, nothing escapes any longer from a tyrannical social conception that invokes, in order to subsist, the spiritual delight of a sinister and grandiose myth represented on the earth by the implacable regime of castes and maintaining itself for thirty centuries without sensibly stirring. Or rather, in that case stirring inwardly without admitting anything from without, or assimilating in a moment what comes from without, like a sombre flood, swarming with monsters and covered with brilliant flowers, which undulates slowly between the choked banks of a religion as fertile, in the renewing of its symbols, as birth and death. As the mild and regular milieu of the one place engendered optimism and induced the individual to establish himself in an immobile social system, the chaotic, inclement, feverish milieu of the other engenders pessimism and forbids the individual, even if he wishes to escape from a pitiless mystical system, to overstep an expanse that is too constantly in motion for him to be able to determine its boundaries.

Here the individual unceasingly lifts above the flood a brow, a hand, a knee. But the flood always draws him in again. Hindu sculpture makes one think of a man engulfed in the mud and struggling in vain to emerge from it. Lyricism and despair rub shoulders in people's souls. The religious and sensual spirit emerges from an eternally moving matter that creates it every moment and swallows it up the moment after.

Hindu sculpture[1] is the image of this universal movement which does not emerge from its indefinite frontiers and whose very lack of definiteness forbids it to emerge. As in Egypt the pictorial spirit undulating with subtlety in the mass of the statue refused to quit the social edifice, here the pictorial spirit tries at every instant to overflow the sculpture, in order to enter it again at once with a kind of sadness. Here, no more than the gods, no more than individuals, no more than architecture itself, is sculpture arrested. A disorderly and tragic movement animates it. Through great shafts of light and shadow, through powerful contrasts incessantly provoked and broken, it overwhelms the delicately shaded rock in the manner of a painting, by throwing into relief or effacing such prominences as the undulations of reptiles, the sudden leaps of wild animals, or the spasms of love. The sculpture remains drowned in its atmosphere of stone. The fevered spirit rushes into eccentric experiments condemned unceasingly to defeat, but imposing on the sculptured material the spirit of great painting. This is the opposite of Egypt where the sculptured material is constantly subdued to the spirit of architecture in order to live concentrically.

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[1] Figs. 39. 131. 132. 177. 178, 207, 216.

But, here as there, the whole problem turns about the individual emerging from the social mold and resolves itself in sculpture which there refuses to emerge from the temple and here cannot emerge from it. And as it took the Greco-Roman invasion to make Egypt leave its hermetic block, it was only at the beginning of the tenth century, when the Musselman appeared in India, then the Christian, that a little foreign air entered this intoxicating atmosphere, while architecture, entirely spiritualized at the outset, became attenuated very quickly, grew exhausted, and vulgarized, and sculpture, which changed in former days the shape of the mountains, began to lose itself in anecdote, the picturesque, and ornament.

It was, moreover, at the moment of the great Buddhist epoch that Hindu sculpture changed the form of the mountains, as it changed it in China and had the strength to raise, in Cambodia and in Java,[1] the monumental enchantments of which the universe common to man, to forests, to animals formed a part in order to whirl there, dance there, disappear like an *apsara* declaimed by the thousand united voices of violins, brass instruments, tambourines, human voices, indistinct murmurs, and mingled perfumes. Buddhism was to penetrate Hindu pessimism and Chinese positivism by means of sculpture, because it developed about a need for social idealism that conditioned the discovery and the culture of the individual. But, in China as in India, the unity of the ideal edifice was such that it took four or five centuries, as in Egypt it took four or five millenniums, to complete this formidable event:

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[1] Figs. 91, 97, 136, 188.

a hundred men, a thousand men perhaps, cut into the same rock the image of the same god, without having the image of this god emerge from a unity so strictly united to their spiritual structure that it seemed to spring from the same heart, to be conceived by the same head, realized by the same hand.[1] An analogous phenomenon took place a few centuries later in the Christian Occident and more especially in France, if we compare the cathedral with a thousand voices to the colossus or the carved grotto. And it was an inverse phenomenon that brought, like the Greek decadence, the Renaissance of the Occident: often a thousand anarchic individuals seemed to have carved the most fragile statuette, composed the smallest picture. The symphonic unity has left the multitude and its dispersed elements to take refuge entirely in the heart, the head, the hand of the hero.

In China, in India, as in Mexico, or in Islam, as in Egypt, as in Dorian Greece and mediæval Europe, the hero is almost unknown. The legend of Rama appeared with Buddhism, and it is indeed his history that blossoms on the palace of Angkor. But it is the only instance and the only place in the Orient that one can compare with the Parthenon and the cathedral for the equilibrium which they seek between the adventure of man and the immobility of the god. In the Orient the hero is the multitude. One sees marching, across the Chinese desert, colossal statues, warriors, elephants, dromedaries, and horses, united like the buildings with the plain and suggesting, in the solitude, those natural accidents that mark its character like the geological skeleton that crops out of the soil here and there. The earth rises in them, it accompanies them, as it accompanies everywhere the Chinese cultivator, who is entirely impregnated with it, and to whom his familiar divinities reveal

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[1] Fig. 40.

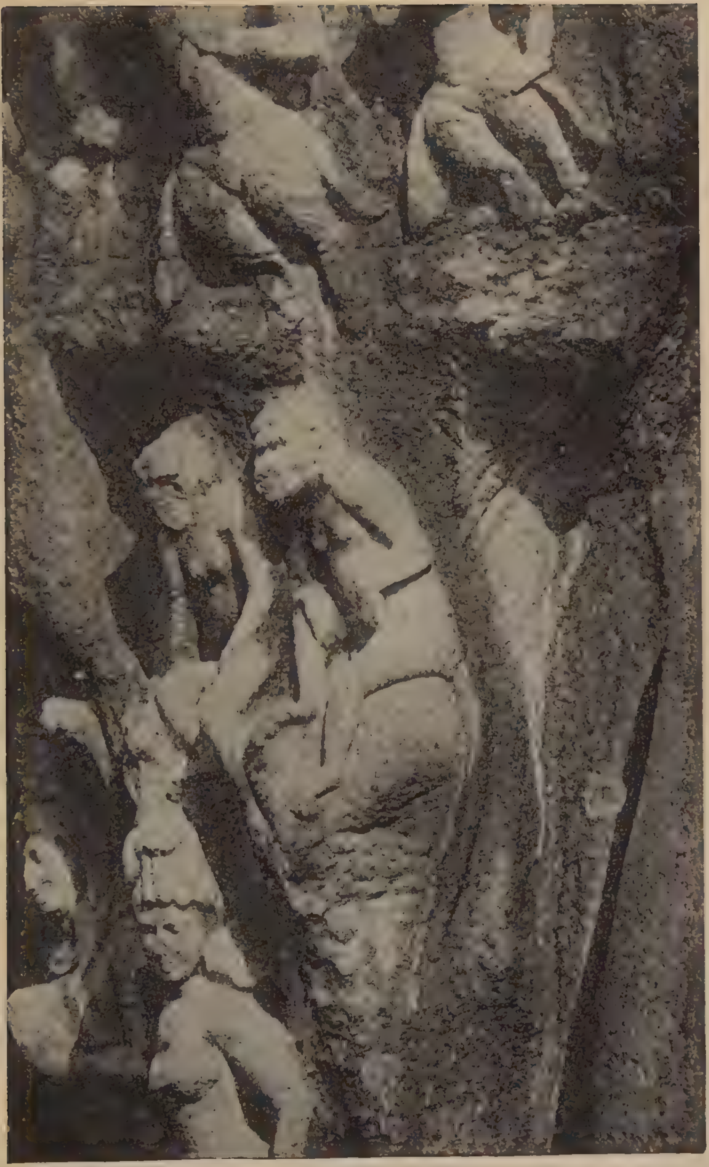

FIG. 39

PICTORIAL SCULPTURE (India)

the consistency of soil, the direction of the wind, the phase of the moon, or the weather propitious for his work.

If the individual appears faintly, and very timidly, it is, as in India, from the time when European armies arrive and rend asunder the common edifice where the individual took shelter. The multiplicity of cults, torn to pieces by fetishism, is only moss on the surface of the motionless moral rock which the ancestors have erected. And if a style of painting,[1] as moving as the mingled voices of flutes, hautboys, and harps, a style profound, discreet, emanating from abstract space like a molecular condensation, appears in the Buddhist convents precisely at the hour when Buddhism, between the eighth and the twelfth centuries, tends to return little by little into the social monument that changes only in appearance, it does not quit the harmonic themes in which the great individual symphony does not even dream of appearing.

It is like a vague attempt to disengage from the social body a few rare melodies. It only interprets the universe supported by its neighbors, talking with them in undertones, murmuring beside them, embroidering like a silken tissue the subtle veil which the anchorite places gently on his soul in order that the innumerable multitude of disciplined souls may not know by what insensible detours he sometimes deserts his roads. Taken *en bloc*, China, its sculpture, its pottery, and its bronzes veined like viscera, is shut up in a hermetic and circular form from which it cannot emerge. One must go to Japan, its pupil, to find a rhythm analogous to those that have characterized the Occident.

When sculpture, here, has broken the Buddhist profiles in order to gesticulate in the age far from the religious organism, painting rapidly appears, then the

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[1] Fig. 41.

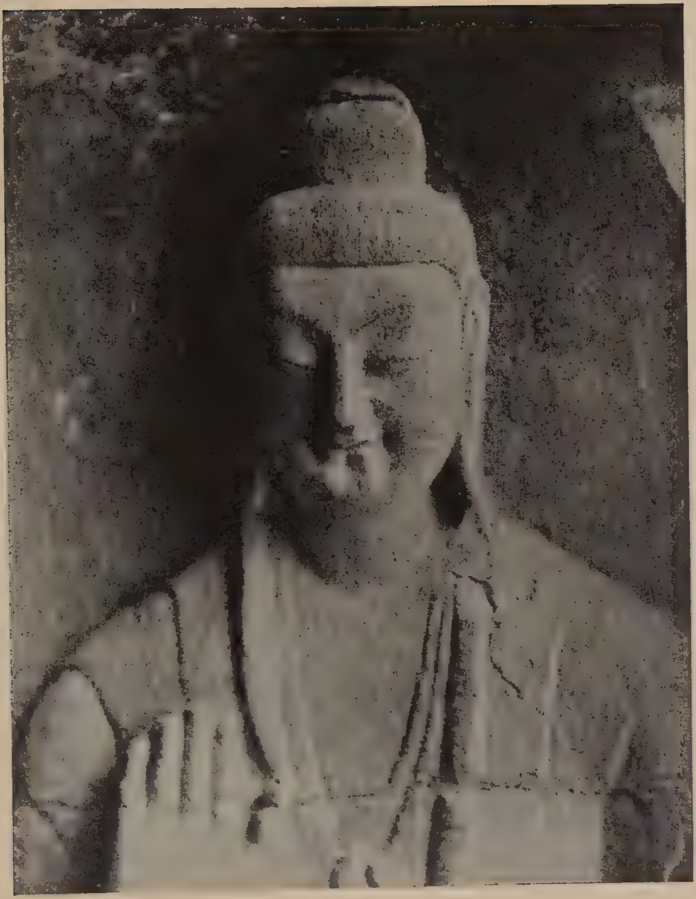

Fig. 40

Collective Unity (China)

nicknack, the article of trade, the carving of furniture, anticipations of a growing individualism which ends by bursting the armor of the mediæval period but which thereby destroys itself also.

Japan stands out in Asia as an exception.

We know the names of all her painters, the names of all her engravers, almost all those of her sculptors after the Buddhist epoch, even those of her potters, her blacksmiths, her carpenters, and her gardeners. A profound phenomenon, which always denotes a social analysis, effectuated or in process of becoming. If one finds it in China only in connection with painting, that is to say the faint attempt made by the individual to differentiate himself a little, if not to emerge from the social body, it is entirely unknown in India where not a single one of the confused waves of the ocean of forms bears a name.

It is entirely unknown in Egypt, where the geometrical rigor of the mass to be built demands an impersonality equal to that of science. Almost unknown among the Arabs, almost among the Persians, save in the sixteenth century, when the individual tends to appear in painting. It is the significant sign that appears in Italy after the Middle Ages and repeats itself and multiplies with incredible profusion, whereas in France it appears only in the fifteenth century,[1] when the worker quits the workshop of the Church for the antechamber of the château, and from that time on is stressed from century to century to the point of insanity, as happens throughout the Occident. It marks equally the passage of the Hellenic social organism at the very first symptoms of its dissociation, for the names of the Greek sculptors only appeared between Solon and Pisistratus, when its architectonic sheath begins to incommode the statue. And its absence is the more striking in Byzantium since one observes there, during four or five centuries, the annihilation of Greek individualism, its confused absorption by the pantheism of Asia in which sculpture and painting sink back into the basilica, just as the individual returns to the

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[1] We have only known the names of the master-builders since the records of the municipalities have been opened up; but before the fifteenth century, not a single name of a sculptor.

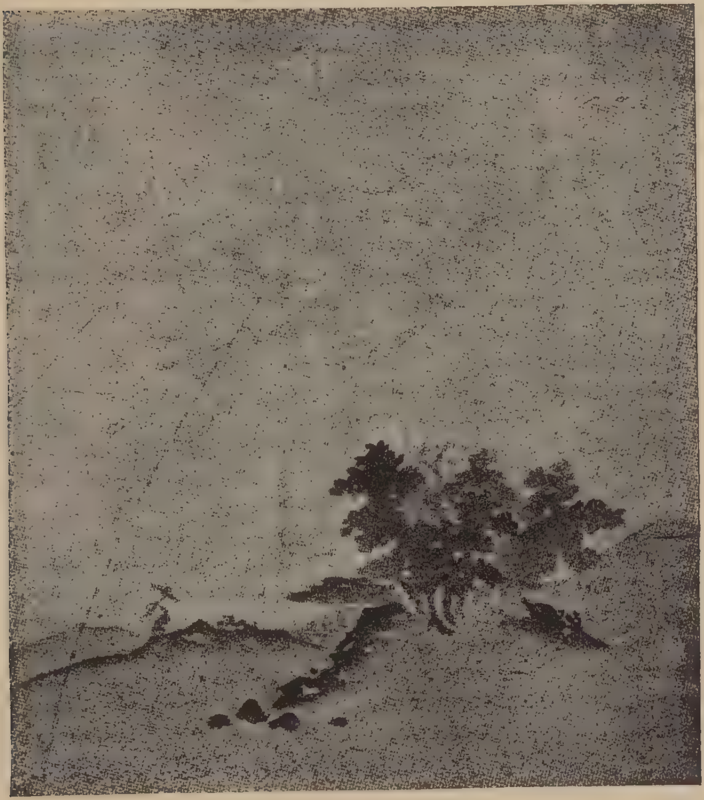

FIG. 41
THE INNER MELODY (China)

Church to form for himself there a pretext and a center of communion.

Nothing demonstrates better than these periodic silences the living reality of the great alternating rhythm that runs through the very center of the arts. When architecture dominates, the anonymous is the rule. When sculpture appears, a few names emerge, at first legendary. From the moment when painting arises, one knows all the names of the painters, as well as all of the sculptors, and often even the builders. Music, through the processions which it regulates, through the dance which it quickens, tends to make the individual enter the crowd again and the name return to obscurity. All this is deeply impressive. If the community spirit prevails, humility is the law, since man believes like man and an inner bond identifies them profoundly. If the critical spirit disrupts this bond, the mystical communion takes refuge in the isolated man who has, hopes to have, or believes he has the strength to maintain it among us and whose sword is called, according to the quality of this force, vanity, self-sufficiency, pride or consciousness of a superior destiny and mission.

The name on one hand, and anonymity on the other, are signs of epochs. According as one or the other prevails, we know how the relations of each man with the social body or with the individual will be determined: with the name, romance, psychology, painting, with anonymity, architecture, metaphysics, law.

VIII

Henceforth, the words that one is accustomed to use in order to designate the different aspects of the styles—primitive, archaic, classic, academic, decadent, etc.—seem to me to assume a meaning much more human than that with which they are generally endowed.

Stone and dust, they become thought and blood. They are the songs of the epopee. One thinks, in connection with them, of the adventurous and at the same time necessary course of the organisms into life.

Emerging from the original confusion, one sees them appear in formless masses, without differentiated organs, then attempt an embryonic order in which the organs shape a rough, inexact form, the members of which seem to be still engaged in the obscure matrix, then, through the more and more complex and harmonious blending of the great instincts rising toward consciousness, the forms acquire, thanks to the solidarity of the energies that travel over them, ease and sureness, then an inner wastage attacks the tissues, the organs pass into deliquescence, or, on the contrary, ossify, the mutual relations hesitate and presently are lost. . . . A grandiose fatality thus assures eternal birth, eternal growth, eternal old age, eternal death. A fatality that determines, no doubt, by maintaining it in the same pitiless orbit, the unity of thought and the moving variety of the appearances it assumes. The human spirit turns unceasingly in a circle, but it perceives, from each of the points of this circle, in proportion as this circle turns with it, continually, different landscapes.

There is nothing in common, for example, between archaism,[1] engaged entirely in a global conception of form whose roots plunge into the social myth and whose methods are borrowed from the architecture that expresses it, and the primitivism that gropingly seeks, on the contrary, to free the form from its archaic bonds in order to make it express the sensations and ideas that are personal to the painter. No doubt, whatever may be the rhythm of an epoch, there are, in all epochs, in order to maintain the need of changing the rhythm.

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[1] Fig. 42.

spirits in advance of it, spirits behind it: furtively, here, in the center of architecture, a primitive appears, and there, in the full current of individualism, a classic monument rises, recalling the greatest hours of the myth at its apogee. But, in taking a wide view of the movements of the spirit, one cannot but discover in it a constant pulsation.

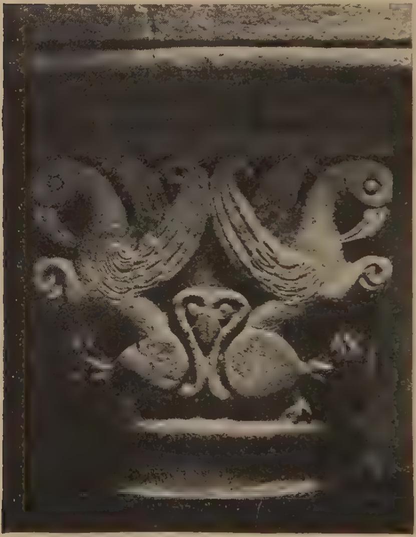
Fig. 42
Archaic Sculpture
(France, xi Century)

When there are only individuals, there is no archaism, or then it is an artifice, as one sees it appear in those periods of extreme social decomposition in which the too intelligent man sets himself to search for his primitive purity and, in despair, demands of the past the lost architectonic rhythms. Where there are no individuals, there is no primitivism, or then it is something that has come from a faraway race or religion that attempts to stammer a language which it does not hear. Archaism is at the threshold of organisms that are growing: it is the nubility of space. Primitivism is at the threshold of analyses that are opening: it is the nubility of man. And although there can exist archaic painters contemporaneous with still complete organisms—such as the miracle of Italian individualism expressing to itself alone, through Giotto, the immense social complexity—although there can exist primitive sculptures contemporaneous with beginning analyses, it is necessary to consider both these cases as exceptions.

The sculptured form is attached to the idea of archaism, the painted form to the idea of (primitivism). The sculptor, who has scarcely emerged from the archaic matrix, attains already a great harmonic equilibrium while the painter feels his way among unknown materials. Della Quercia, Ghiberti, Donatello, full-blown, complete sculptors, possessing all the resources of form in movement are older or of the same age as Fra Angelico[1], who would suffice to define primitive art in its most touching aspect, but also the one in which it most humbly seeks to discover the privileges and the means of painting. Giovanni Pisano himself, born more than a century before Angelico, seems younger than he. In France, Jean Goujon, in whose undulating elegance already appears the disquieting note of the social world that will make the sculpture of the eighteenth century one of the most delicious of things, but one of the most fragile because it is as far removed as possible from the conditions of that art, is the contemporary of François Clouet who did not yet suspect the harmonic intercrossings through which the great painting was to determine the musicians to demand of the orchestra resources it did not yet possess.

There is something profoundly dramatic in these contemporary voices, rising from the same desires, victims of the same disappointments, aiming at the same hopes, that seek each other and are concealed from each other because they do not use the same language or, if they do speak it, falsify it, and unwittingly express, on one hand that which gives way and is lost, on the other that which is fortified and concentrated in the spirit of a race unanimously bound for the same ends.

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[1] Figs. 43, 44.

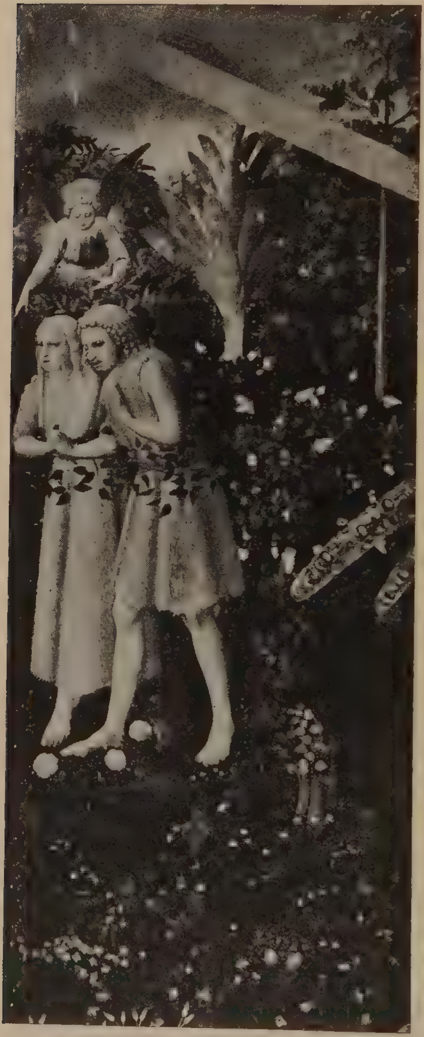

FIG. 43

PRIMITIVE PAINTING

(Fra Angelico, xv Century)

The elements of the fugue call, reply, advance, pursue, pass each other, retrace their steps in a vast, captivating ensemble that reconciles its contradictions and its antagonisms in order to force the unity of man to achieve its poem in spite of the difficulties and the snares of the road.

Thus the drama pursues its way to the end. Academism, which invokes classicism, has a contrary purpose, since academism, in those epochs when the fermentation is most acute, when all laws, all systems, all dogmas are under discussion, when the family is dismembered, when the leprosy of interests and the flame of intelligence consume the ruined social body, maintains a miserable fiction of order and unity in chaos, while round about it a

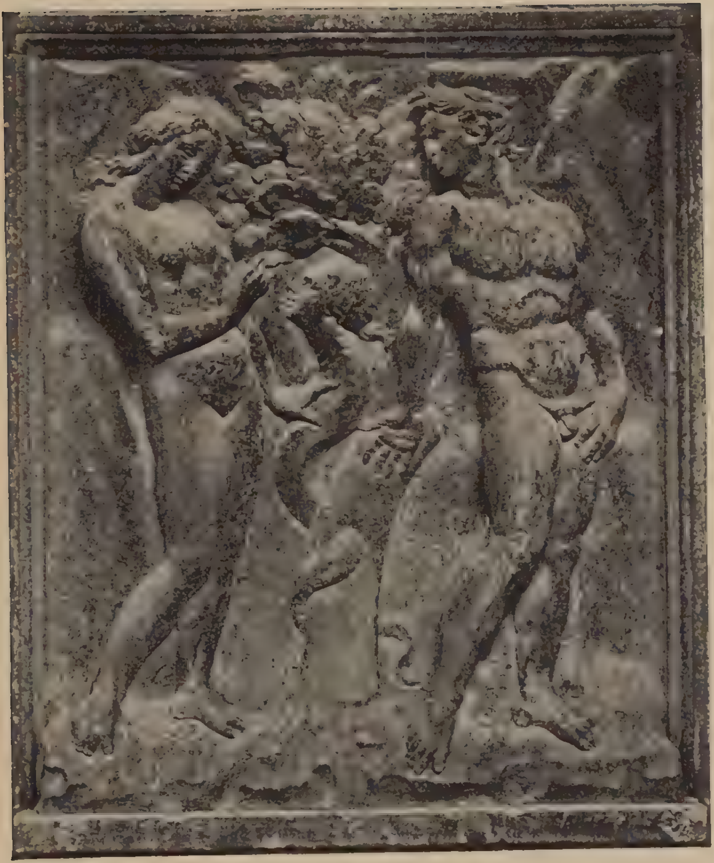

Fig. 44

Mature Sculpture (Della Quercia, xv Century) thousand new expressions are born or developed, and a few men concentrate the chaos in the order and unity of their spirit.

Academism is made for poverty-stricken souls, for the herd without a master wandering with the random guidance of its most vulgar sentiments in search of the most facile—since they are the most habitual—expressions which other poor souls suggest to it. It is the only tendency in which there is no sense of the drama which, when it appears, resolves the symphony of color or sound in the heart of the solitary and which classicism, in all epochs, has resolved in the unanimity of consciences or hearts.

For if antiquity knows at least one classic point of equilibrium that responds to the fugitive instant when man, appearing in the bosom of the myth, succeeds, through a powerful effort, in maintaining its intoxication in his rising intelligence, France has twice known this strange hour. Once, at the moment when the Romanesque and the Gothic confronted each other with their antagonistic conceptions, theocratic architecture arriving at the very height of its task, saw sculpture invading its porches and capitals just when the nerves and the long shafts of stone spring forth from all sides in order to raise, aerate, rock the immense vessel. The other occasion, more restricted but more evident, at the moment when the Occidental soul, in decomposition, was bringing from Italy the elements of an individual style and thus threatening to overwhelm France and that country worked out an intellectual construction capable of enclosing this style in an expression of the ensemble and of reascending the flood.

These moments are perhaps the summits of the plastic drama, and note clearly—the Greece of Phidias and Sophocles is not an exception—it is just when they supervene that tragedy appears: however awkward and stiff it may be in the twelfth century, at the hour when the crisis of collective consciousness bursts forth and shines, making of Chartres the most profound drama in stone that men have erected, it is in the twelfth century that tragedy introduces the pathetic element into the Miracle play, wrested from the clergy at the same time as architecture and sculpture, and written in the vulgar tongue to be heard by all.

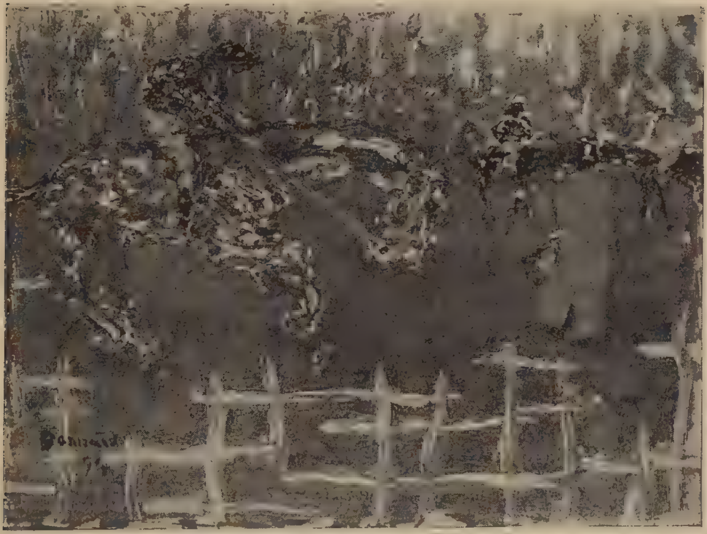

Fig. 45
Creative Decadence (Bonnard)

Just half way between Corneille and Racine, Versailles subordinates the anguish of lofty consciences to victorious reason, an anguish not stilled in the heart of the tragic poet whose name is Pascal. And as to the Prometheus of Æschylus, whose lamentations fill the interval that separates the drama of Olympia from the drama of the Parthenon, it is the central point of a greater symbolic drama that stretches between the myth of Adam expelled through knowledge from the terrestrial paradise and Jesus, discovering, through knowledge, in his intimate paradise, a new intoxication from which the cathedral will spring. It is perhaps by chance that Hindu tragedy seems to be contemporaneous with those sculptured caverns to which Buddhism, threatened with being swallowed up anew in Brahmanism, summoned the forests, the rivers, the beasts, fornication and death to the aid of the inner man whom universal matter was engulfing. But in any case, in the Northern races, drowned in the rain and consequently ignorant of the plastic drama, did not Shakespeare appear at the very moment when, standing on the threshold of the social edifice which the fall of Catholicism had shaken, the individual comes to affirm that he alone can raise it up again?

Tragedy is the meeting point, in the consciousness of the poet, of the ancient values that have reached their maximum of spiritual maturity and the new values that spring up on every side.

Tragedy, in all cases, contents itself with affirming. It has never held back a race on the edge of the abyss. On the contrary, that course is quickened when drama becomes more widespread, when the poet has known how to assemble it, opening up, in the spectator, unsuspected avenues, awakening passions and terrible curiosities, arousing the need to try its heroic strength, or to submit its weakness to the ordeal of hell.

Launched into the future with the individual, painting, then music, accompanied by the novel and later by the resurrection of lyricism, cause to appear in certain spirits, either for blame or praise, possibilities of a communion whence new forms will spring up. The word "decadence" has no meaning unless one envisages a civilization as a closed circle outside of which everything is darkness and will remain darkness. But the world has other resources in its need to live, and therefore its need to create unceasingly, and in the superb indifference with which it takes from the chosen race the flame which will illumine the race yet to be chosen for the realizations of which neither the one nor the other knows the meaning or the aspect. What one calls "decadence"[1] is precisely the epoch in which the greatest number of differentiated elements ferment, decay, die, spring up or grow, and in which, consequently, new relations appear, in which unsuspected groups are organized, in which virgin forces are united for the sake of a future they will not see. If everything dies of the principle that causes it to be born, if, for instance, Greece is killed by its limited research for truth in the object, Islam, through its exclusive spiritualism which pursues the arabesque in a too abstract circle, India through the sensuality that engulfs its spirit, everything is born again of the same principle that has caused it to die elsewhere.

Greece built its house with materials gathered amid the Assyrian, Egyptian, Phœnician ruins. It is thanks to the already degenerate Greek statues brought by Alexander to the Indus in his military chariots that the immense flood of Hindu sculpture, through the mediation of Buddhism, inundates Asia. And who knows if the first Egyptian statue was not born and will not be reborn of some immemorial form, already in a period of decline, which black Africa introduced, by its caravans, into the upper valley of the Nile?[2] The Byzantine decomposition endows Italy with the idol the adoration of which gives life to it. France beholds three centuries of the agony of the Italian spirit. Moreover, these beneficent invasions are anticipated and desired in people's hearts. With the historic drama, the plastic drama continues. Negation, hazard, despair, paradox can feed the fire as much as faith. The continuity of an effort never lies in imitating the external appearances of the effort that preceded. It can go forward much more truly in forms that appear to contradict it than in forms that pretend to continue it. When, for instance, some civilization, reaching the extremity of analysis, breaks and throws into confusion its idols and, rather than copy itself indefinitely, attempts, with their débris, to outline some barbaric form that seems the antithesis of the mission it has fulfilled, does it not thus give the noblest proof of the courage of man, who, even at the cost of disavowing his past, keeps on imagining in order not to die?

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[1] Fig. 45.

[2] Figs. 47, 49, 93 bis, 198–199.

FIG. 45 A

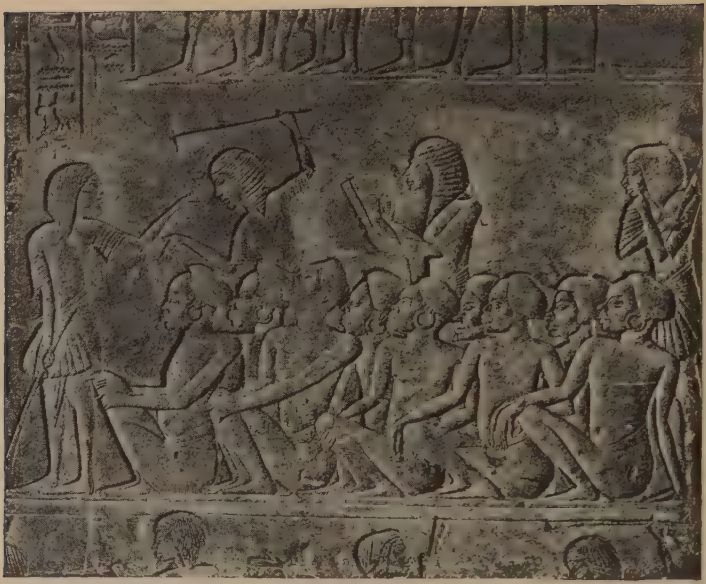

Fig. 46

Negro Slaves (Egypt)

Chapter II. THE IMPRINTS

I

TAKE any tribe of negroes or Polynesians. From the first hours of your contact with it, an astonishing fact transports you with enthusiasm or indignation.

It is spontaneously artistic.

The black man practices without relaxation, without effort, and with an ardor that borders on violence, all the primitive forms of art. They are his very existence. He lives them, so to speak, in the activity of every day. He is, in truth, drunk with sound and color. Feverish cadences, burning visual orgies veil his eyes, hum in his head, mingled with wild odors and too heavy perfumes.

He scans his work and his walk with rhythmic chants and songs. The rows of silver circles about his arms, his neck, his legs, gleam and ring at every step. Everything for him is a pretext for music and the dance, nubility, betrothal, marriage, funerals, the departure for the hunt or war, ritual feasts, meals, music, the dance in which all the women, all the men, all the children of the tribe take part.

The industries of the household, of costume, war, the chase, are inseparable, in their origins, from the first and the most essential manifestations of art. There is no trade that is not the continuous exercise of a lyricism that is rudimentary but impossible to restrain. The currier, the potter, the jeweler, the smith, the carver, the armorer, the embroiderer, the dyer reveal themselves as born artists through the sureness of decoration, of ornament, of the association, a hundred times varied and always infallible, of tones. Everything is carved—utensils, arms, furniture, masks for the dance, for the hunt, for war. Everything painted or dyed—cotton drawers, thongs, belts, boxes, seats, mats, shields.

The idols, cut in rugged and simple planes, in a candid care for the most intense expression, and besmeared with blue, ochre or red to sharpen the accent, burn with a life that is abstract and furious at the same time.[1] Whether the African stains his earthen walls that are like coagulated blood, or the Polynesian chisels his wooden cabins with scrolled volutes of which one finds the multicolored repetitions on the skin of his body and his face, a permanent attraction to the sensual side of everything that has life form obliges the black man to pursue it and emphasize it everywhere. If others—the white, for instance—seem to possess before all the moral and social sense of life, the negro has the rhythmic sense to such a degree that he cannot conceive or express it otherwise than according to sonorous rhythms, formal or elementarily colored, but as irrepressible as the beating of his heart.

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[1] Fig. 47

Once, says Gobineau, when there existed three primitive races—the black, sensual, impulsive, drunk with rhythm and color; the yellow, close to the earth, charmed with well-being and somnolent reverie; the white, energetic, war-loving, made to create order and dominate—one day a drop of fire was poured by the black woman into the torpid marsh of yellow blood, into the cold torrent of white blood. On that day, that day alone, the lyrical sense was born in the man of extreme Asia and in the Indo-European. There, in the troubled depths of an interested positivism, here, in the vigorous assizes of a discipline of combat hitherto immovable, this drop of fire, bringing with it the furious love of form, rhythm, and color, started the conflict that lyricism alone

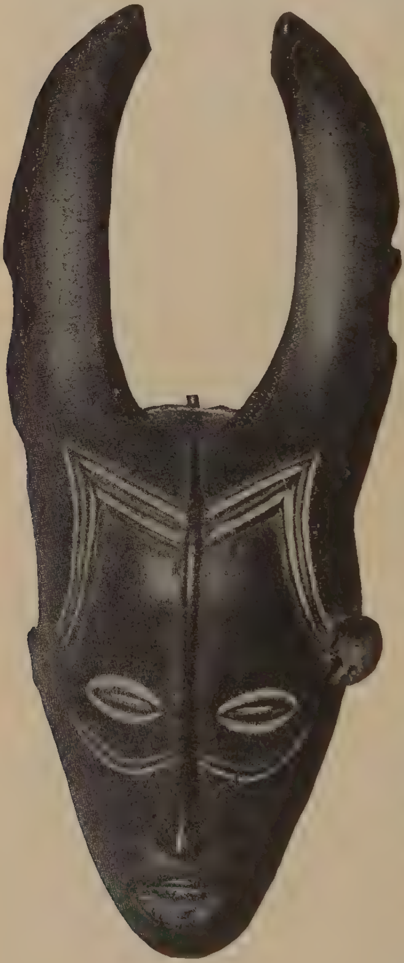

Fig. 47
Rhythm (Negro Art)

can solve. As far as one looks, into the origins of history, at least since history has been expressed by means of the image, one discovers the burning trace of this great event.

Ancient Egypt would no doubt have rested on the broken flints of its most ancient necropolises if the black migrations had not impregnated it gradually through the upper valley of the Nile. Still earlier, if one evokes the presence, in Spain and Southern Gaul, of images sculptured on tools or carved on rocks, we learn that the negroid skeletons are found in the lower sediments of the shores of all those countries, oriented toward the black continent where similar forms decorate the caves and the weapons of the hunters. The most ancient monuments of India are later in time than the encounter of the whites who came from the West and the North by way of the rivers, with the blacks coming up from the South. In all living white peoples in whom the black impregnation is lacking or is too light or too remote—Scandinavia, North Germany, England, Rus-

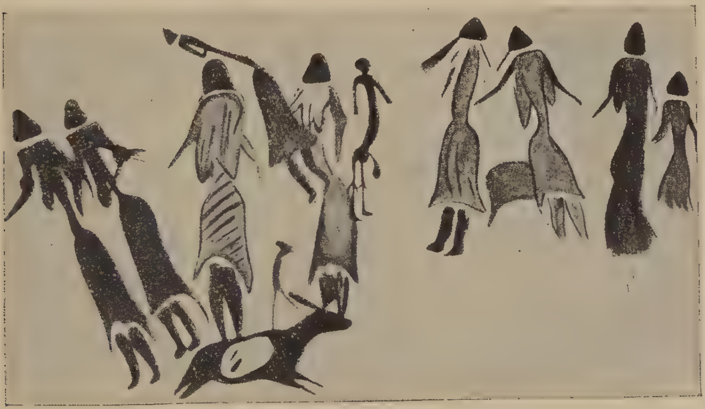

Fig. 48

Prehistoric Rock Fresco (Spain)

sia, Poland—the plastic manifestation is indirect: it reveals imitation, the school, acquired virtuosity, strain. And the exclusion is still more striking if one turns toward the yellow man in whom the virtue of the black ancestor shows itself as actively as in the man of the Occident.

His trace is easy to follow in the Indo-Chinese or the Malay, both constantly impregnated, on whatever side they turn, with the blood of the Polynesians or of the Dravidians of Hindustan. Less evident, perhaps, in the Chinese, in whom the infiltration is more ancient and the mass of whom, for fifteen hundred years, have hardly allowed themselves to be encroached upon except on their borders. It is, nevertheless, after the Macedonian armies had reached the Indus that the first Chinese sculptors appear, two centuries before Christ, so close to the Greek form in their nervous, dry, drawn appearance, less preoccupied with the mass than with the contour and the detail, and it is after the inundation of China by Buddhism through Hindu immigrants—whole tribes, I imagine, whose successive waves broke into foam for four hundred years—that the efflorescence

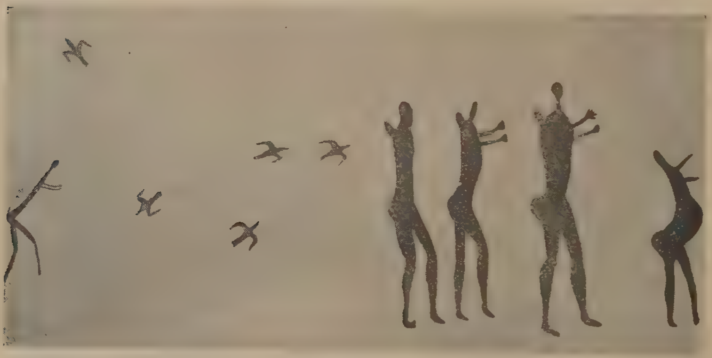

FIG. 49
AFRICAN ROCK FRESCO

of the Chinese monumental sculpture took place, peopling the deserts and the mountains, filling them with carved grottoes and avenues of colossi resembling an army of invaders.[1] The art of the Hans, the art of the Tangs rose upon a propitious terrain.

Through Tibet, through Indo-China, if one believes in the accumulation of negroid types along the valleys of penetration of the southern rivers, profound ethnic migrations occurred continually, pouring into the blood of the yellow races the tributary streams of black blood that have twice embraced it. Even if one admits that Chinese pottery,[2] the most anciently known after the Lacustrine potteries, had appeared in the yellow lands before any mixture of blood, it is not possible to conclude from this that the Chinese had been able, alone among all peoples, to escape the black ferment, the art of the turner being common to all the primitive races because of its utility. All the more that perhaps here it serves as one of the solutions of the problem of the origin and haunting persistence of rhythm.

Think of the love of the Chinese for the clay of his fields, the baking of which he watches over, the cracks of which enchant him, which he sometimes buries in order to impose upon it the long and intimate caress of the dampness of the under-soil. Think of the care with which he vitrifies his porcelain-clay, hammers his bell or his bronze vat, everything that is gently and melodiously sonorous, everything that seems to be born only from the whirling movement of the lathes. His somnolent reverie, which opium makes still heavier, seems to follow for centuries the musical humming of the paste as it begins to settle, through its mechanical rotation, into a minute planet, while the heedless hand imprints upon it furrows like those made by the wind.

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[1] Fig. 40.

[2] Fig. 50.

Did not the invincible tendency of the great Chinese sculpture to pursue the spherical model that hums endlessly about a central invisible nucleus come from remote atavisms transmitted by the primitive coppersmiths and potters who must have been lulled to sleep amid their activities by one of the most ancient musics known? This slightly sullen contemplation, this floating and restrained meditation may have aroused in the Chinese soul, in default of the visual imagination, the inner rhythms that resulted later, after the yellow migrations into Eastern and Northern Europe, in preparing the Slavs and the Germans for the blossoming of the poem of sound, the Slavs and the Anglo-Celts for the blossoming of the verbal poem.

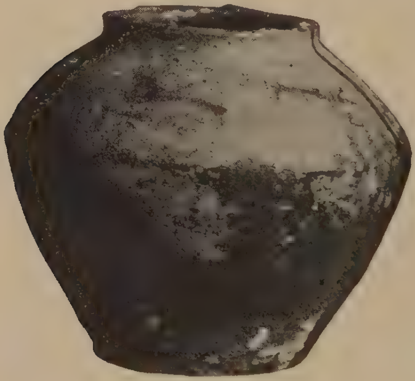

Fig. 50

The Music of the Lathe (China)

It is especially in the white peoples of Finnish blood—Russians, Germans—that one meets this invincible aspiration to music, into which they have been driven by the plastic imagination deprived of the aptitude for expression in form by the absence or the rarity of the black blood.

Wherever, therefore, the pure white or the pure yellow live, plastic art only appears as an imported article or an amusement of the learned. Only where the black has touched them do we find the higher forms of the imagination organized in visual images, among the former by means of the order-bestowing reason, among the latter by means of patient, slow, subtle meditation.

It then resumes its exclusive rights, the burning drop of blood is lost in the memory of the species, which seems to happen in present-day China, deprived for fifteen or twenty centuries of all contact with the black peoples.

I am thinking of the Hindu drama in which the too large and too continuous affluence of black blood gives birth to a constant rupture of equilibrium, man wallowing in the mire with the flame in his heart. I am thinking of the equilibrium won, on the other hand, on the architectural plane of the Egyptians and the Europeans. Almost everywhere there are white tribes better organized for war, driven by their need for order and seeking a place in the sun, who precipitate a flood of fresh blood into the feverish morass where it spreads its iron control over the ferments of the mire. And almost everywhere flowers spring up on the surface of the waters when the first anarchy begun by the drama gives place to the temporary stabilization of the social body.

It may be that this tragic genesis lasts four or five centuries, as among the Greeks, or seven or eight as among the Italians or the French, or ten or twelve as in Spain; but these are only historical incidents, shortened when the races that meet on the same territory settle down there, or prolonged in new migrations, which a more or less favorable milieu alternately hastens or retards. But the fact remains constant. Thus one sees the pale Iranians overflow the plain of the Ganges to lose themselves among the Dravidian masses till the rise of Hindu art.

Thus one sees Greek art springing up on the shores of Attica to testify to the encounter of the Dorians who have come down from the North and the Ionians and Mycenians impregnated, through Syria, with the blood of the black slaves who people the harems of the Orient.

Thus one sees the Teutons covering with their successive alluvions the plain of the Po and the Apennine valleys where dwell the Italians previously brought into relation with the black peoples by the politics of Rome, so that a new Italy may begin the strong flight that will transform Europe; leaving to its less virile Venice the privilege of a richer expansion, thanks to the continued mixture, in the veins of the Italianized Nordic and Celt, of Semitic blood and black blood.

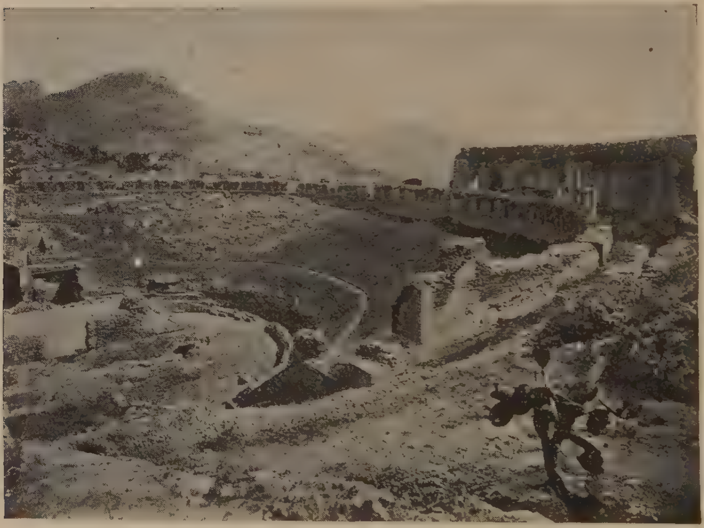

Fig. 51
Roofless Theater of the South (Taormina)

Thus one sees Christian art emerging from French soil because tribes of Franks have come into relation with Celtic peoples who have long been in contact with the southern races.

Thus one sees the Visigoths disputing with the Suevians over a Spain impregnated with black blood up to the day when, delayed by terrible convulsions of war, by the arrival of the Arabs, by the fragmentation of territory, an ephemeral and lofty flower rises from the field of carnage. Even in the case of the Germanic Low Countries which were in continual relations with the Mediterranean and the Orient through Bruges, Antwerp, Amsterdam, and moreover occupied for nearly a century by Spanish armies, we witness the birth of a plastic art as warm as that of the South: tropical gold in the mist, wings of purple in the waters.

This ethnic drama is so universal that it seems to us necessary. All its vicissitudes are repeated in the New World where first the Toltecs, then the Aztecs from the North come into contact with the primitive populations of Yucatan and Mexico and cause the aboriginal art to spring up which the black Polynesians, after having peopled Easter Island with colossi, awakened along the ridge of the Andes when they skirted the American continent in their canoes. . . . Everywhere the white conquerors appear before a splendid but fissured edifice which they destroy; opposing their simplicity, their health, their abstract order to a culture superior to theirs but worn out, rotten, through centuries of a domination that has become too easy and is foundering in the moral anarchy of individualism and security. Swallowed up at first in the mass, their spirit emerges from it one day, mingled with that of the mass, under the form of unknown images in which blend and push forward, in a shining equilibrium, the qualities of the new species created through a few centuries of the mingling of elements hitherto hostile and in any case separate. It is a chemical operation in which the will counts for nothing.

On the contrary, it is born of it and guides the newcomers through a thousand tragedies toward the anticipated forms destined in their turn to decompose in order to experience other contacts and undergo other recastings. There is in these penetrations, these fermentations, these perpetual fluxes and refluxes a guarantee of renewal, and consequently of the love of images, susceptible of consoling man; man who is so avidly attached to the form that torments him but who is forever incapable of seizing it.

II

Suppose now that the primitive black tribe gradually spreads through some European group by emigration toward the less torrid climates, by conquest, by slavery, by the entrance of its women into the harems of the white chiefs. Suppose the lyric *élan* has been imprinted thus upon this revivified group in which the white blood still dominates. Will the poem about to burst forth preserve the accent of the plastic art of the blacks or, modified in its customary inspirations and expressions by the inner landscapes which the black atavism retains and by the exterior landscapes which the new species experiences, will it assume a special accent in which the traces of its origin will not be found? The element that Taine invoked and Gobineau misunderstood has just appeared. It tirelessly exercises its obsessing function. A metamorphosis is produced; no doubt the inverse metamorphosis will be produced when the black blood dominates, as in the Hindu, for example.

Not only the ethnic material but the plastic material has changed. A fruitful marriage takes place between them which will resolve the biological drama begun by the mixture of bloods and the change of setting according to the proportion of this mixture and the character of this setting.

It is in fact because it rains that these roofs slope, that these theaters are covered, when elsewhere the

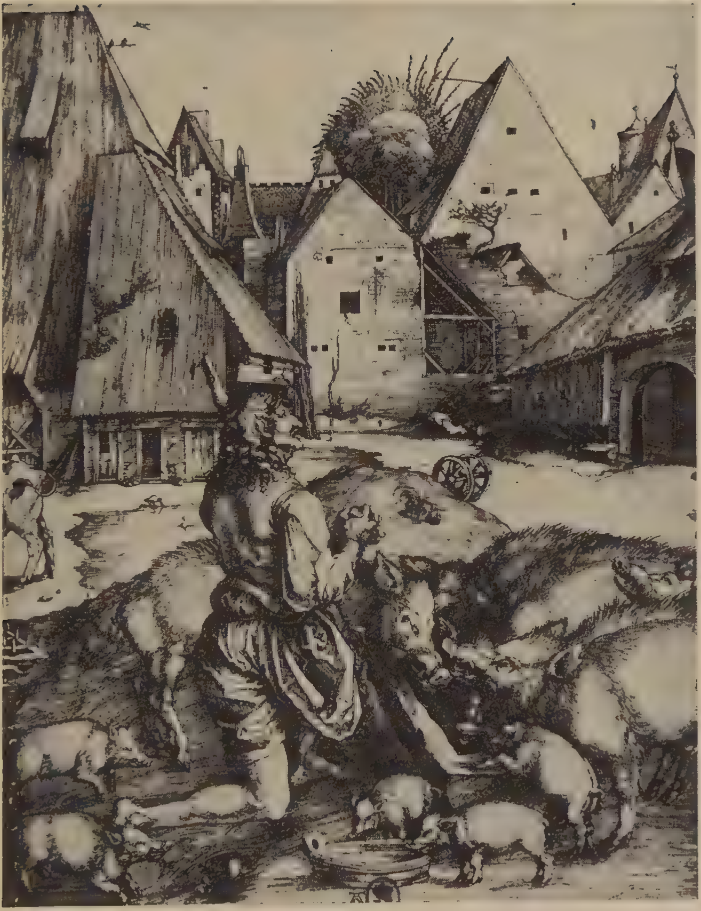

Fig. 52

Roofs of the North (Dürer)

tiers are exposed to the broad daylight.[1] On the burning sands, people have neither roofs nor tiles, but flat terraces so as to enjoy the coolness of the evening. There, as here, the earth, the air, exercise over the builder an admirable tyranny. The former furnished him the materials, which, if the edifice is made from the trees of the country, of the limestone that crops out everywhere, of the marble or granite of the neighboring mountain, imprint upon it a sort of evident sensual kinship with the flesh, the muscles, the skeleton of the same soil. The latter, saturating it with warm rays, gives to its walls the tone of the unhewn rocks, the parched leaves, the fruits that are ripening round about, the dust that mingles with its débris.

Moreover, by drenching the edifice with rains and mists, by clothing it gradually with mosses and lichens, the climate unites it with the forests, with the fields which, like it, are bathed in this air. The night dew, the weight of the dead leaves or the snow, the fissures made by the sun or the frosts, the birds' nests that hang there, the seeds that fall and spring up there, the pollen of the flowers or the spray which the wind flings there—everything connects the edifice with the solids and liquids of its country by a thousand invisible bonds. The rivers clasp it like arms, or cause man to place it at the bend which they make, where their waters slacken their speed. The roads attract it and press it upon the bosom of the little hills. The toughness, the friability, the humidity of the subsoil, the dimension of the openings necessitated by the quality of the air and light for the building, determine its proportions, its situation, and the thickness of its walls.

One need not go far to find moving examples of these irresistible differentiations that give to the constructions of neighboring provinces the decided accent of these

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[1] Figs. 51, 52.

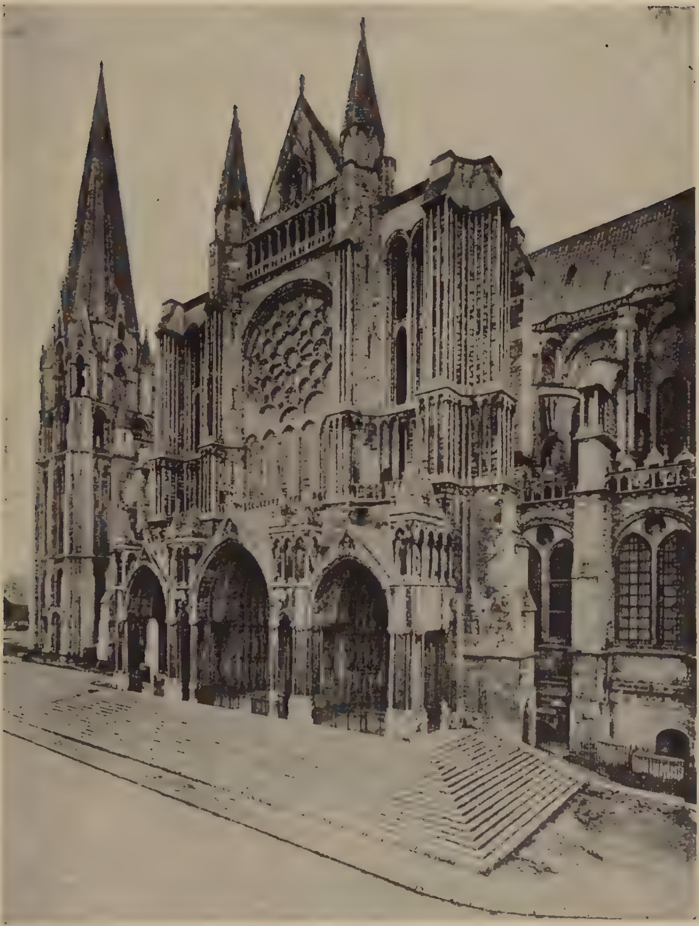

FIG. 53

MISTY SURROUNDINGS (Chartres)

provinces, even when these constructions serve the same use, tend to the same end.

The same rigorous principle determines, for instance, the whole ogival architecture of France in the Middle Ages. But look at this land of the Ile-de-France where the brooks quiver, where the verdure quivers, where the mud of the roads is saturated with dead leaves, where the haze over water, shimmering in sunshine, gives the atmosphere a mauve color, and then these towers that rise from it, mauve also in the evening, murmuring with looms, covered with wild plants, animated, greenish, trembling like a watery meadow: if their walls offer wart-like surfaces to the diffused light, it is that it may play easily over their curves.[1]

Observe, on the other hand, this soil of Languedoc or Provence where the rock pierces the surface and these fierce fortresses, naked as a stony waste, where the flame of the ogives ascends between the red buttresses: the light of the South cannot corrode them where they rise in a single block, well aware that ornamentation and the play of the surfaces would be concealed by the brightness.[2]

Now cross some ancient country where the spirit of the age has hardly penetrated, where the towns and villages have remained what they were three or four hundred years ago, three or four thousand years perhaps, where even man has scarcely changed in his aspect, his customs, his costume, his ideas. Everything there seems an emanation and even a function of the earth. See, on the banks of the Nile, how the temples with their regularity of shape and the straight lines of their silhouettes repeat the aspect of the cliffs that border the Valley of Kings, how their hypostyle halls with the upright shafts topped with leaves recall

[1] Figs. 30, 53, 63, 88, 129.

[2] Figs. 124, 125, 195, 206.

open palm-groves under which the light shines.[1] See how the little Greek temples crown the promontories that seem their natural pedestals, with their triangular pediments like the form of little hills, where not a single tree rises, everything on the scale of a compact, measured, restrained landscape. Look at these Italian towns that blend in the distance with the geological formations running toward the crest where they sprawl out, twisting their stone roots amid the stone heaps there, like them brown or red, arid like them; and the bare towers that rise above them with the stiff *élan*—different from others and egotistical—of the cypresses that rise on every side.[2]

These Roman edifices provided with thickset limbs to dominate the stony plains, long limbs to stride over the rivers as they carry water from the springs to distant places, to the height which the extent of the desert or the depth of the ravine demands. These cupolas of Islam seem to revolve, like slow, pale whirlpools in the warm, quivering air. These pagodas of India reproduce, from top to bottom, all the plants, all the beasts of the jungle; and now all the beasts of the jungle swarm through them and the plants have made them a part of the jungle.[3] These walls of Japanese temples with their congealed and frozen motifs in the lacquer have a monotonous and systematic variety, which repeats all the aspects of the bouquets of cryptomerias and cedars crackling and whirring with insects and birds.[4]

Stop. Enter the houses or the churches.

See those little savory pictures, full of health and balance, where you meet again the same servant you have just passed, washing the door-sill or the windows, this same young woman sewing under the curtain of her window, this sick child in its mother's arms, these vagabonds near whom you were sitting a few hours ago in a tavern on the quai. Try to divine, in the shadow of this chapel, what rises tier upon tier behind these tormented forms and these haggard faces marked by the passions, the bristling palaces, the parched, burned landscapes where the parasol-pine and the cypress alternate, clear-cut little hills against a sky that is streaked with hard white clouds. Enter these narrow hypogees, surprise, in the gleam of the torches, these busy laborers amid the reeds by the river, these ducks, these paddling geese, these slender ibises, these palm-trees, these date-trees which you have left behind you in the broad daylight.

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[1] Fig. 80 bis.

[2] Fig. 54.

[3] Fig. 131.

[4] Will reinforced concrete end by dominating in all regions of the world, as many architects think, especially Le Corbusier-Jeanneret? Will it everywhere manage to substitute the geometrical anthropocentrist ab-

Consider these fluid canvases on which you find the tall, undulating women, the beautiful children, chubby

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straction for the climatic and ethnic empiricism which has prevailed hitherto? Yes, to be sure, at least for a time, if the function of the edifice, from the pole to the equator, is and can be exactly the same. No, if the architect attempts, for the sake of expressing a single and systematic idea, to resist the exigencies of the illumination that is to be obtained and the climate that is to be accepted or combatted. Under the pretext that reinforced concrete is the most malleable material that architects have had at their disposal hitherto, it would be at least paradoxical if its use should result in favoring not an adaptation most closely suited to useful and harmonious ends, but a uniformity of aspects destined to engender very quickly discouragement and ennui. I have touched upon this question in the Introduction to the present work, and I have treated it at greater length elsewhere (see *History of Art,* Vol. IV, Preface to the Edition of 1923). When this reservation is made, I admire the beneficent necessity of such an effort as that of Le Corbusier-Jeanneret. It introduces resolutely into our spirit simple notions that cannot but purify its concepts, regenerate its activity and clear its habits of the ashes that befoul it. Admirable realizations, we know, have already been obtained in the order of industrial architecture by the engineers of America, Italy, France, and Germany, and, on the field of civic construction, by Auguste Perret, Loos, numerous architects of the Low Countries for whom Berlage had prepared the way, and certain German builders (Figs. 35, 215).

and blond, that you have just met in the great park drenched with fog, where the branches of the oaks drip their dew on the emerald of the lawns. And these others, with their gray, sad expanses, where cavaliers dressed in black wander in the dust. And these lakes strewn with sails glimpsed between the zigzags of the maritime pines, where some triangular flight of migrating birds emerges from the fog (you can buy a print of this scene in the first bazaar you come upon in some city built of wood, where paper streamers and lanterns swing in the breeze). And this terrible effigy of cruelty and flame, a heap of tusks, claws, jawbones, decayed hands, which you can only meet with in the heart of the desert, after having crushed the head of a viper with your heel, exposed your smarting skin to the burn-

FIG. 54

PLASTIC SURROUNDINGS (Corot)

ing of the mosquitoes, and torn your flesh on the spines of the cactus.[1]

One cannot doubt this influence of things on the reactions of the spirit when one sees the extra-visual impressions themselves awakening within us the powerful sensorial echoes that immediately transpose themselves into images in the field of our representations, so many centuries old. This perfume, for instance, suggests a definite landscape that recalls the circumstances in which it was usually perceived. German or Russian music evokes the aspect of the countries and the customs which, by degrees, have fashioned it. The savor of this food brings before us, on the screen of our memories, the sea, and a definite sea, blue or mauve, violet or gray, the odor of this other food the equatorial forest, and this other one recalls the damp tillage or the pastures of the North. If the slightest sensation, far removed from the sort of objects among which it first appeared, causes these objects to be suddenly reborn in the memory of the most jaded individual, how much more, in a being as vibrant, as emotional as a poet, will the continuity or the repetition of appearances cause to arise an obsessing image which he will attempt to reproduce, and presently, more or less consciously, abridge, purify, stylize, symbolize? How can he help carrying it with him when he moves from place to place? How can he help associating it invincibly with the new and unexpected appearances that he experiences, imposing upon them his own familiar rhythm which, on the other hand, they will modify insidiously in their turn.

Poussin and Claude Lorrain[2] translate into French rhythms the Italian motifs which, in themselves give to these rhythms a part of the significance they would

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[1] Fig. 55.

[2] Fig. 56.

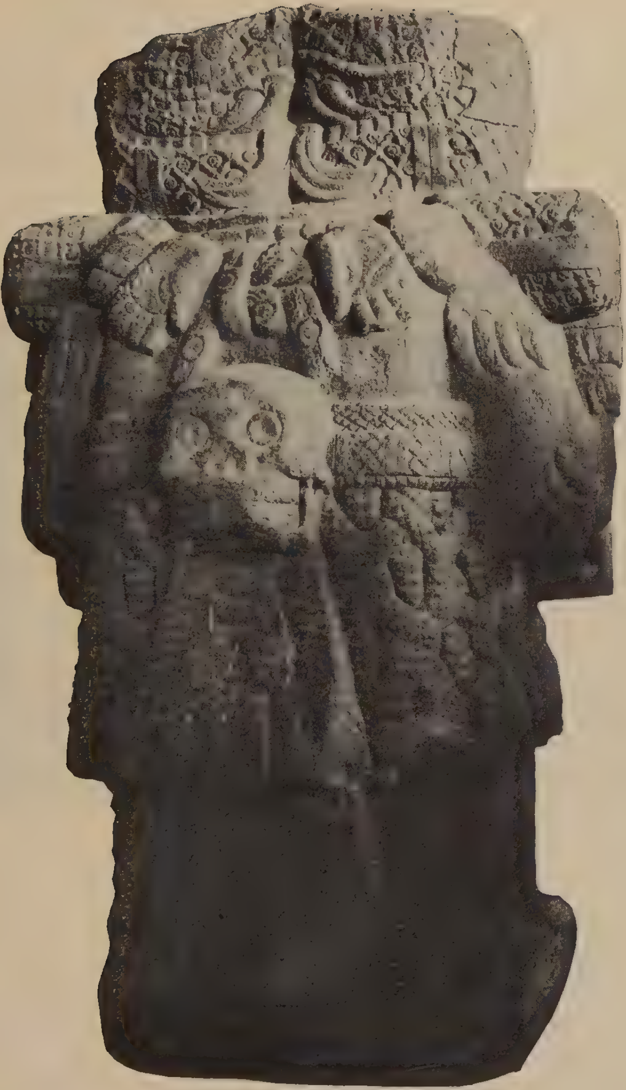

Fig. 55

Feverish Surroundings (Mexico)

not otherwise have possessed: it is indeed Italian they speak, but with the accent of their own country. Similarly, Primaticcio translates into the Bolognese language the emotion he owes to the vine-leaves, the branches, the fruits of the orchards of Fontainebleau. Similarly, Carot, toward the middle of his career, imposes the equilibrium and the charm of France on the landscapes between the Arno and the Tiber, and the firmness of these landscapes on the aspects of his country. Similarly, El Greco, so profoundly influenced by the harsh face of Spain, causes to play upon this face the reflections of the long ikons and even a little of the nervous intelligence of the idealized form that characterizes the Greek.[1]

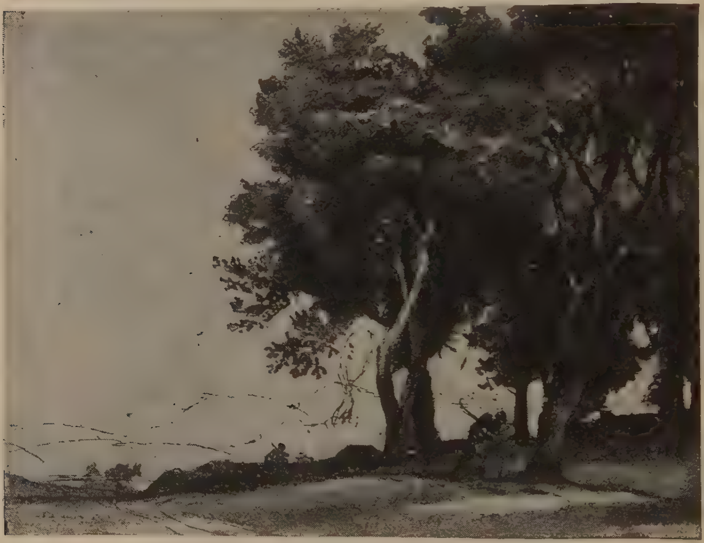

Fig. 56

Rhythm and Motive (Claude Lorraine)

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[1] Fig. 210.

Everywhere a strict accord tends to arise between the exterior aspects of the world and the inner realities of the spirit. What one must still discover are the conditions of this accord, its elements, its origins, its frontiers, and the contradictions it reveals to any one who wishes to analyze it.

III

One asks Taine why every Florentine of the fourteenth century is not Giotto, every Venetian of the sixteenth is not Titian, every Dutchman of the seventeenth is not Rembrandt. A foolish and perhaps a meaningless question. Because the flower of an apple tree differs from its fruit, from its leaf, from its branches or its roots, are we to conclude that it is not the flower of the apple tree? Or that it can grow on a poplar, or an oak, or even on a rock or on water? A people, a nation or some ethnic, political, or mystical group forms everywhere an organism that strives to adapt itself to the conditions of life demanded by circumstances. But this adaptation imposes upon the whole organism a complex play of functions the excellence of which is precisely determined by the differentiation of the organs that compose it. It is their hierarchization, it is their reciprocal and interlaced subordination that create out of their own strength the strength of the entire organism: every Florentine of the fourteenth century, every Venetian of the sixteenth, every Dutchman of the seventeenth shares in Giotto, Titian, Rembrandt, as Giotto, Titian, Rembrandt share in the Florentines, the Venetians, the Dutchmen who are their contemporaries, their predecessors, or their ancestors.

Art is a sign, no doubt, a way of speaking. A language, a language that differs from another similar language according to the man who speaks it, according to the place, according to the epoch in which he speaks it, and also, let us note clearly, according to the man who hears it.

But did Taine, who knew this, hear this language clearly? Did he find, in its varied accents, the secret spiritual relationships that express the inner man under the shell of appearances? It seems as if he had confused with the spirit which they conveyed the sonorities, the nuances, the inflections, the customary bad habits, and even the orthography that accentuate these accents. He scarcely saw the work of art save from its picturesque angle. He grasped forcibly but almost exclusively its external relations with the general aspect of the geographical milieus; the history, the passions, the customs it expresses here or there, that which makes it here violent or even cruel, there bourgeois or anecdotal,

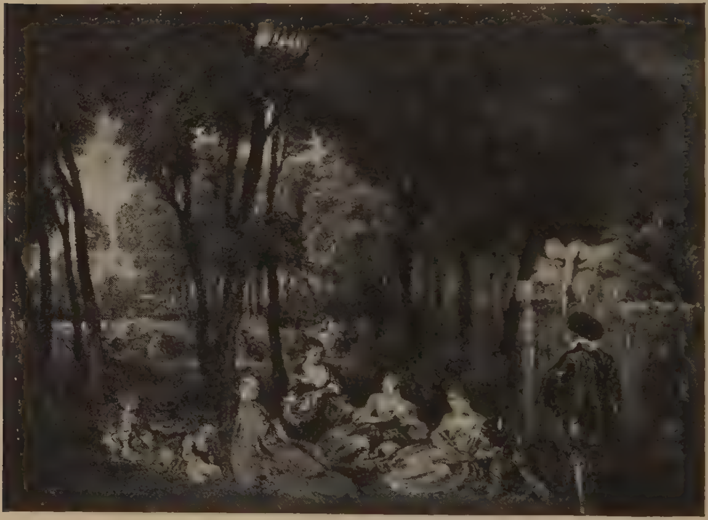

Fig. 57
Transposition (Watteau)

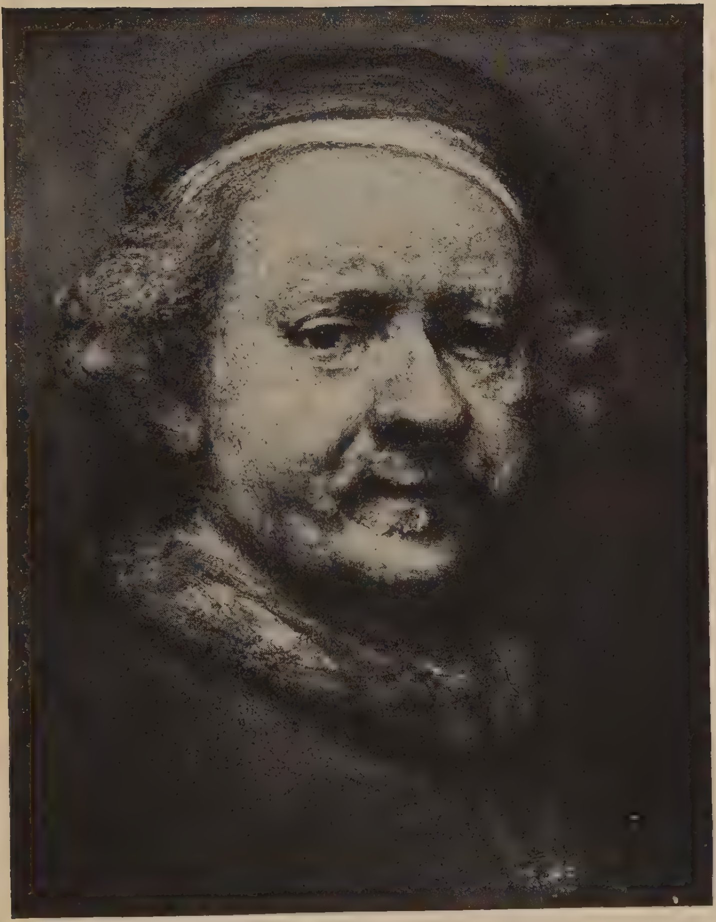

Fig. 58

Domination of Surroundings (Rembrandt)

elsewhere idealistic and generalizing, and also, in this canton, given to translating itself through form, in this other through color. And indeed, these relations cannot be denied.

If I do not think it either obvious or necessary that man should aspire to reflect uniquely the immediate aspects of beings and objects, I believe he cannot express himself save by borrowing from these aspects all their expressive elements, because he has no others at his command. If he does command others, brought back from his travels, or from the inner landscapes which atavism obscurely reveals to him, they are those that have struck him first, that still shape him, and that touch almost uniquely those to which circumstances oblige him to address himself.

But there is an ambiguity here. It is the great creator of forms who knows how best to obey. But it is also in him that transposition takes place most constantly and most unconsciously as well. The gray tints of cinder, pearl and silver that tremble over the slopes of Guadarrama, the rose or mauve clouds that graze their summits, the oranges of the market-place the tone of which one finds at twilight in the atmosphere of Castile, the pinks of the rose or the reds of the carnation, are never offered us by Velasquez and Goya in the place where they have seen them, in the order in which they have surprised them: they quiver in this trinket, in the ribbon of this order, in this downy arm gloved in white; they shine in this dark hair, they stain this corsage with a bloody spot, they empurple the mouth in this painted face.

The sky and the sea of Venice penetrate the marbles, the flesh, the satins of Veronese. The mother-of-pearl of the waters of the Marne throb in this petticoat in which Watteau[1] mingles also the warmth of the woods of Nogent in autumn, just as he catches their spring dews and the pollen that powders the wings of their butterflies. The herrings of the market-place, its rusty scrap-iron, its rags, the flesh-color of the tulips and the russet gleam of the hovels of Amsterdam saturate this man's face, this cradle in which the child-god sleeps, this woman's breast painted by Rembrandt in his poverty-stricken old age. I see clearly the enormous distance that separates Rembrandt from Potter, for instance, and even the kind of antagonism that one glimpses between the latter, who reflects his milieu peacefully and faithfully, and the former who plays with it, in order to reflect himself, Rembrandt, as if with the thousand instruments of an orchestra.[1] But I affirm that if Rembrandt, born elsewhere than in Holland, had perhaps been a man of the quality of

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[1] Fig. 57.

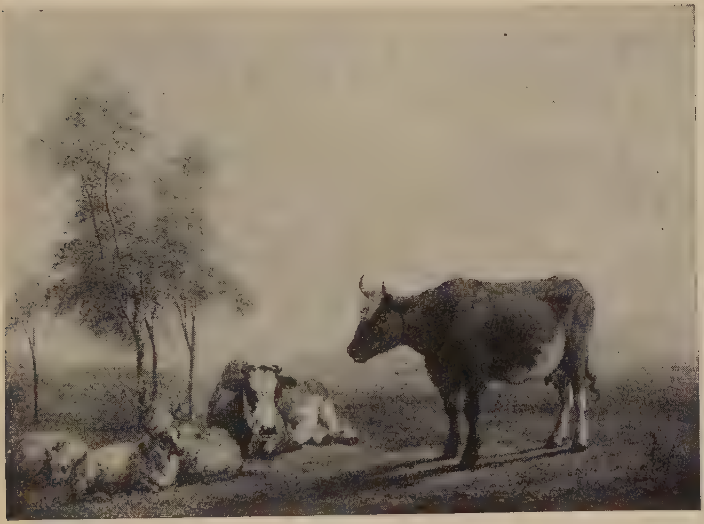

Fig. 59

Submission to Surroundings (Paul Potter)

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[1] Figs. 58, 59.

Rembrandt, he would, admitting the activity upon him of similar historic circumstances and atavisms, have expressed himself by means of a painting different from his own, or perhaps by means of sculpture, or perhaps by means of music, or perhaps by means of the word.

Here, under the mist and the rain, lies a verdant plain. There a rocky expanse burned by the sun. It is not surprising that man does not speak the same language in both places, and I might show, in the manner of Taine, for what very simple reasons the latter will be precise, the former floating and drenched in water. Nevertheless, here as there, the sun rises every morning from the same point of the horizon, disappears every evening into the same point of the horizon, following, between these extreme points, the same curve in the sky.

Here as there, at rigorous intervals, day and night alternate as do the seasons. Here as there, the whole sky seems to turn about an invisible pivot. Here as there, sowing time and harvest time succeed each other. Here as there, wherever man and woman meet, fever seizes them. Here as there, the child is born of this encounter. Here as there, man and woman rejoice in his presence. Here as there, man and woman suffer from his disappearance.

Here as there, man and woman die.

Here as there, all the essential elements are common to all beings in their inner life. Here as there, they experience the same essential phenomena in the external life. It is natural, therefore, that here as there they traverse with more or less the same steps these two regions. But it is also natural that such of the phenomena as differ or even contrast in the external life—the soft earth here, the hard stone there—should ring differently under this same step. Otherwise all our works would be expressed in the same language, without accent, uniform, neutral, useless through excess.

If we do not distinguish until after a long apprenticeship two Venetian, or Florentine, or Roman, or Greek, or Dutch, or Spanish, or Assyrian, or Chinese, or Egyptian, or Hindu works from one another, we distinguish quickly enough a European work from an Asiatic work, later a Roman work from a Greek work, a Venetian work from a Florentine work, an Egyptian work from an Assyrian work, a Spanish work from a Dutch work, a Chinese work from a Hindu work. Why? Because its author has grasped, I think, the most essential relations between the milieu and the language, the thousand subtle exchanges that define the first and indicate the second, and because he imposes them upon us with an irresistible authority.

The milieu is a complex thing, evidently, comprising everything that meets the author's glance, everything that strikes his ear, everything that springs up, unknown to him, from the intimate powers which his near or remote heredity has deposited in his cradle. A milieu in which not only the usual aspects of the country, its geological structure, its climate, its culture, the customary foods it produces, but also the original formation imposed on its inhabitants by the patient modeling of their immemorial life, agricultural or pastoral, commercial or maritime, industrial or military, listless or intense; the events and the laws, the measureless unbridling of the passions or their mastery secretly contributing together to form and even liberate the creator. The creator, I repeat, is he who knows how to obey. If this endless milieu did not exist—a powerful sculptor arresting and fixing the language—a Japanese work and a French work would be absolutely indistinguishable, would consequently lose all accent, consequently all interest, consequently all universal human significance. It is our differences that unite us, because we approach one another in order to study them, and because in studying them we discover our resemblances. It remains to ascertain why, although our resemblances increase, these differences exist and why it is probable that they will exist and perhaps even desirable that they should always exist.

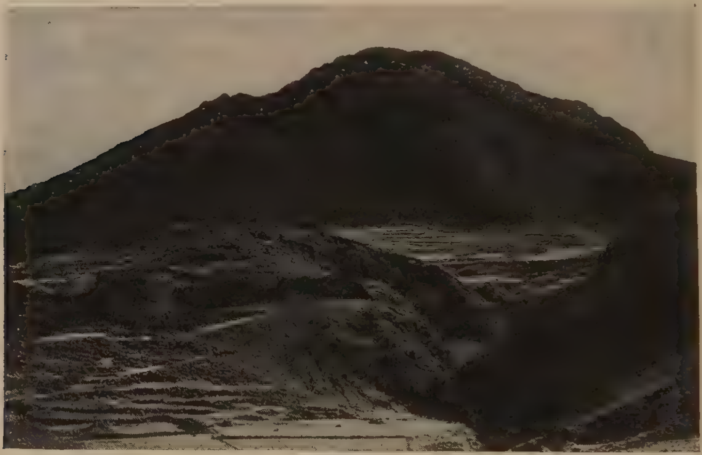

Fig. 60

Sculptural Geological Surroundings (Greece)

IV

It seems evident from the first that certain countries solicit and develop our visual qualities, and others do not, and consequently that plastic expression is born more spontaneously and enriched more freely and forcibly in the former than in the latter. I am thinking of the insignificance, the ugliness or the picturesque banality of central and eastern Europe, of the monotony, the peaceful or solemn neutrality of Switzerland, of the mild and empty prettiness of Lombardy, encircled nevertheless by so proud a crown—Tuscany, Venetia, Umbria—of the barrenness of the pampas of the two Americas—everywhere in these spots are nonexistent, or extravagant, or dissembled forms, a dull light, a vulgar color.

It is a commonplace, on the contrary, to testify to the marvel of the entrance into Holland from the northeast or the south; the shining mist, objects, and persons bathed in it suddenly assuming an unexpected brilliance at once profound and translucid, the gay display of geraniums at all the windows, the blue and red wings of the windmills, the blue, orange, ocher sails of the boats, the black diamonds of the cattle besprinkling the polder. A commonplace to mention the surprise one experiences at Avignon, after a night in the train; discovering this gray and rose expanse punctuated by the black of the cypresses, those mauve mountains in the distance, the sudden passage into the light, the accent, the vigor. the clearness of the South. To recall

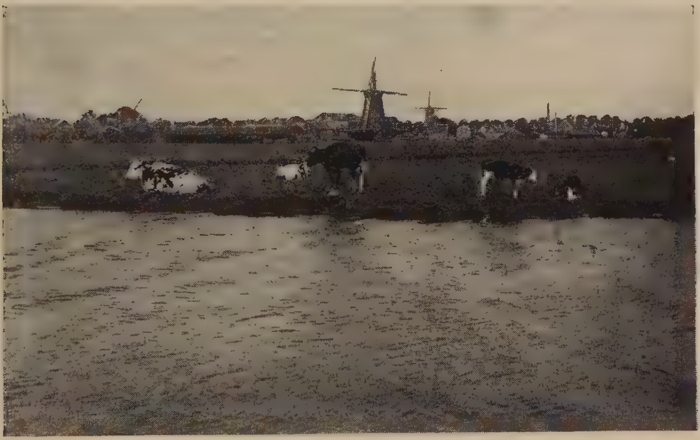

Fig. 61

Pictorial Atmospheric Surroundings (Holland) the arrival in an Oriental port where the rocks, arranged in an amphitheater, open their arms that seem brushed with gold by day, covered with violets at eventide, and those waters that seem illuminated from beneath, such sunny, azure rollings in their depths where the phosphorus wanders all night. This Spain, a dead planet, crystallized in the pearl and silver of ashes, through which the red lands assume tones of orange and the rare flowers a funereal accent, their brilliance veiled in all this gloom.

The approach to Ile-de-France with its bending poplars, trembling leaves, roofs and houses brushed with moss, its light vapor everywhere present and suspended like a breath, gilding the walls, gilding the surface of the rivers, lighting with a gentle flame the summits of the monuments. Nature only touches the heart where man forms part of it, certainly. But it might be said that he only forms part of it where it touches the heart. Elsewhere there is silence in a brackish peace, or paltry combinations of consciences and hearts, or, when the race is strong and marked for royalty, the withdrawing of souls into themselves and the springing up of music or verbal lyricism.

In Greece, sculpture, like a hostess, comes to meet the traveler. Bare, without trees, without grasses, even the mountain is sculpture. The stones crop out everywhere, like bones. Enormous vertebræ, monstrous ischiums emboss the soil. On their continuous, smooth, or salient peaks they catch the sinuous masses that spread out in the light, which accentuates their structure and penetrates them, until they enter and fuse themselves with it in the form of the spirit.

Nothing of this exists in Venice, Holland, or the Ile-de-France where the mist lightly veils all forms, but also, through its thousands of millions of little suspended drops, heightens the colors, their correspondences, their contrasts, multiplies the reflections, subtilizes the passages, hatches, in ceaseless exchanges all the enchantments of the air. The skeleton of the planet is the master of the sculptors, the atmosphere is that of the painters, especially when it floats above a damp country where sun and water mingle, close to the sea or a network of canals and rivers, covering the fields and the woods.[1]

I state the facts, the relations, without insisting on the physical causes that are self-evident in their ensemble but whose exact analysis belongs to the domain of the savants.

The Ile-de-France, and especially Venice and Holland, are islets of atmospheric gems and fires, more or less brilliant or subdued, where all the colors of the prism mingle in endless combinations: they are also islets of painting. Not far from the former is Tuscany, a dry country, with a hard and frigid light, very sharp in color, where the little hills, the trees, and the houses stand out like marks on a window-pane. There, painting assumes an aspect that is dramatic but dry and clear-cut, without echoes, without sounds, the linear frames of which no symphonist has ever been able to break. In the neighborhood of the latter, the German mist, thick and gloomy, covering the geological skeleton that is further concealed under a mantle of pines, allows only indefinite or truncated forms to emerge from it, the cries of the poultry-yard, the sounds of big and little bells, the grinding of wheels, the murmurs of torrents: the art-worker, born there, lives in a closed room, his bench under the lamp, and his patient labor is one of sentiment and memory, unless the musician, assembling all these scattered sounds, all these confused sensations, melts their wandering forms in his heart so that the sonorous edifice may sink its roots there before it grows.

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[1] Figs. 60, 61.

When they try their hands at painting, the forms are seen from too close by, as through a mangifying-glass, some placed near others, without any care for ensembles or subordinations. The tones do not mingle. The harmony is never obtained through their reciprocal echoes, but through their juxtaposition. The canvases of Holbein would suffice to define this spirit.[1]

Painting, it is true, is one of the privileges of Spain. And yet, at first glance, Spain is nothing but sculpture. The skeleton of the soil is apparent on all sides, although less compact than in Greece, where it borders and protects all the populated gulfs. Here the settlements border the rivers on the Andalusian plains or on the high plateaus of Castile and Estramadura. The granite mountain chains are far away. One would say they were heaps of roses, or silver wings suspended over the horizon. The warmth of midday shuts the native up indoors, and all life is in the evening, at a strange hour when the setting sun gives the atmosphere a uniformly orange tint, in which the dark clothes, against the white rough-cast of the walls, assume the quality of translucid stones, in which the rising dust—which seems to play here the rôle of the drop of water at Venice or in Holland—gives the fixed or wandering forms a phantom-like air, spots that stand out, of a supreme distinction, and veiled, with a halo on their borders.

Often, in broad daylight, one sees mirages floating above the glowing plains, lakes of tinsel, lakes of pearl across which the warm air vibrates, so that everything seems to quiver, everything bears an unearthly accent. In this milieu Velasquez, Zurbaran, Goya reply to the harmonists of the Low Countries living in their whole-

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[1] Fig. 62.

[2] Figs. 33, 185, 186, 210.

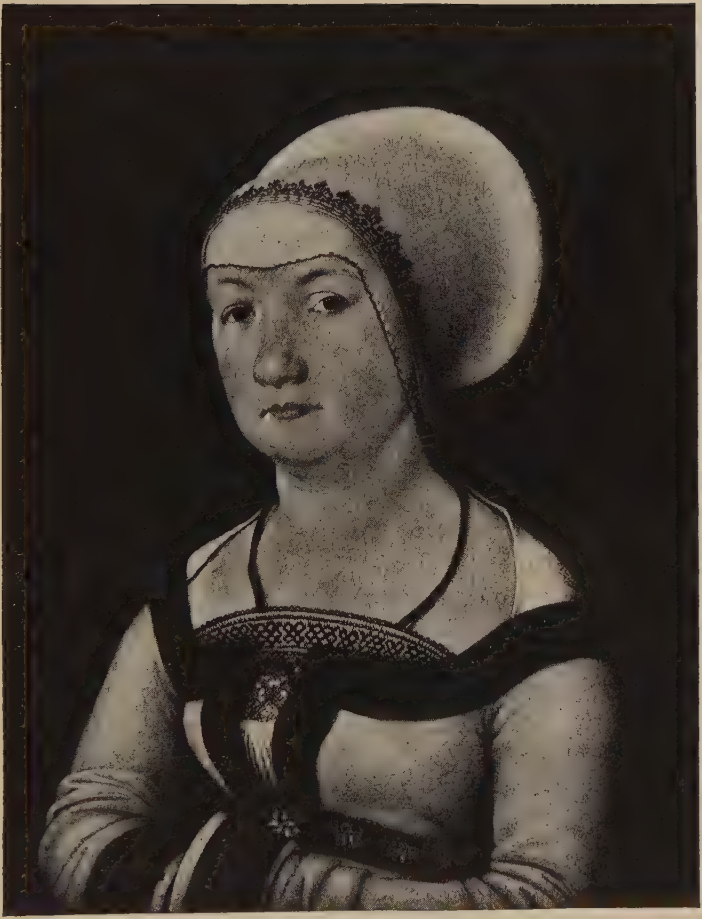

Fig. 62

Harmony by Juxtaposition (Holbein)

some interiors and their luminous mist and to the symphonists of Venice playing in the enclosed space of that city where everything is dancing illumination, interlaced reflections, reciprocal echoes between the phosphorescent water of the lagoons, the colored fermentation of the façades, the air saturated with vapor, the ceaselessly changing union of the sky and the sea; and the Spaniards reply with their secret, rare harmonies, made up of very few elements, but associated according to an infinity of nuances, not like a hundred instruments in an orchestra but like four or five flowers in a bouquet; nay, more, a bouquet in the twilight, sparkling, austere, abandoned.

The Ile-de-France, so rich in painters, Boucher, Chardin, David, Delacroix, Corot, Manet, Seurat, about whom an imposing procession of lesser masters are grouped, witnesses nevertheless before their time the flowering of a line of sculptors that has no parallel save in the powerful harvest of stone through which the civilizations of antiquity and of the Orient were so forcibly defined. But here sculpture no longer has the traits it assumes in the regions where light plays across surfaces deprived of humus, trees, and humidity, such as Egypt, Greece, Assyria, Italy, the South of France. There, sculpture suffices to itself, is circular, one might say, even when it is *veneered* upon a foundation of architecture, and revolves about its own volumes so that it exists in space like a bone from which all the flesh has been stripped away. Here, sculpture is always *mingled* with its architectural foundations, playing upon them and through them with shadow, light, and mist as one might treat the masses that stand out or sink into the background on the surface of a canvas.

Even on the ensemble of the edifice it imprints the aspect of a great painting, confusedly animated, swarming with scattered life, seeming to stir with the wind's breath like a field of wheat under a breeze, or fine rain, or fog.[1] Is it not remarkable also that we should find such characteristic contributions made to the art of the Ile-de-France by the painters who enter it from other regions? Into this somewhat troubled but very subtle mauve and golden atmosphere that attracts and harmonizes them, Watteau brings the succulent fluidity of his Flanders, which relates him to the Van Eycks, to Van der Goes, to Patinir, to Breughel, to Rubens; with Ingres comes the burning dryness of his dusty Midi which holds him close to the masters of Tuscany, Rome, and the Orient; with Daumier we see the sculptural robustness of his native Marseilles, founded by Greek sailors; with Courbet, the somber harmony of his Franche-Comté, impregnated with Spanish blood.

The case of England is no less characteristic. Here we have light bathed by rain, transparent, limpid; everywhere the forms seen through it are never clear-cut but rounded by the thick covering of the earth and leaves. We find gushing and flowing waters, deep, gleaming mire in which wheels and feet sink. No sculpture. A fresh painting, yes, but soft, spongy, without foundation, clean as a water-color—often the water-color itself is the chosen tongue of its best artists —Constable, for instance, or Bonington. The verbal lyricism that prevails here is awakened and maintained by the moonlight under the trees and over the lakes, by the laments of the nightingale in the warm evenings, the dark manor houses, the ivy-clad ruins, the eternal sea beating the cliffs, the adventure of travelers, the immense fleet leaving the ports, sailing back to the ports, bringing into the fog with it the flora, the fauna, the burning climates.

This lyricism passes into the enchantments of Turner,[2] so wild and unexpected, with their cloud palaces, their sunlight among shadows, their Southern mythologies amid the smoke of London and the fogs of the North. But these enchantments are inchoate, uncertain as the flight of birds in a storm, without muscles, without a bony structure, without expressive prominences rising and stamped from within. The art seems a feat of lyricism, overstressing its visual medium in order to bewilder us with incoherent harmonies and paradoxical relations and throw us into a pantheistic disorder that is repugnant to our sense of the plastic, at least on the spiritual plane where the Occidental moves. Such an endeavor could scarcely succeed if some secret logic, dictated by the traits of the soil, led by the immemorial play of sentiments and ideas, did not draw from this soil, deepening these sentiments and ideas, a sort of moving armature, always unsettled, everywhere provisional, but everywhere present and always in process of becoming.

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[1] Figs. 53, 63, 64.

[2] Fig. 84.

It is thus that the genius of India both creates and solves this problem through the eternal pouring of its moving water between the dykes which it refuses at the same time to define or to overflow.

India lies between Shakespeare and Turner.

The one has conquered it for the English people—whom the other reveals as a little crushed by its conquest. This continuous pantheism, irrepressible as a flood, which animates the words of the former in the way we know, only passes into the canvases of the latter by violating and enervating the methods of painting. India is the only country to realize this pantheism in sculpture through the unanimity of its masses which have hollowed out the mountains, chiselled the cliffs, given the rocks the palpitating forms of plant and animal. No expression is more completely one with its natural milieu than these temples that are so quickly the letter and the very spirit of Hindu philosophy which everywhere mingles fecundity and death and causes them to blossom from each other. Warm rains for six months, flowing in warm torrents to the sea, yellow rains, sometimes red, when the setting sun pierces their thick floods and the burning dust they raise from the soil.

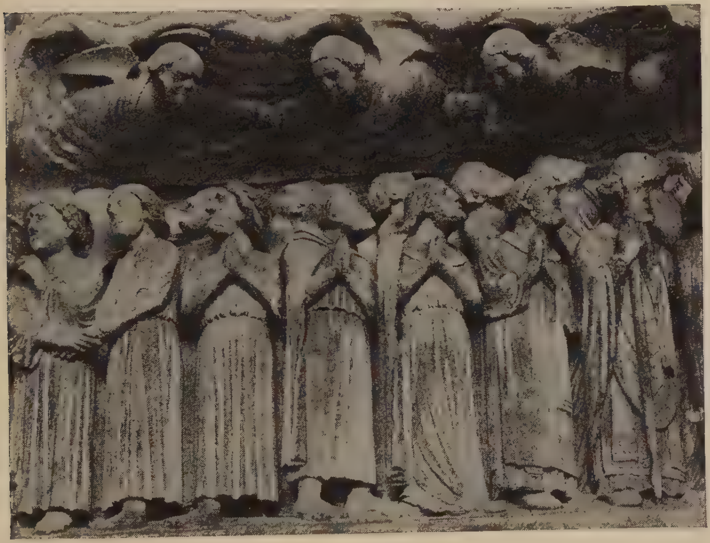

Fig. 63

Sculpture Mingling with the Background (Chartres)

Fiery winds, bearing the miasmas of the marshes in a whirlwind of mosquitoes, sowing at haphazard fertility or famine through rain, drought, seeds, and destructive insects. Parched deserts forever alternating with impenetrable forests. Several harvests a year growing untended or annihilated at a blow by a cyclone. Every phase of climate from the equator to the pole lies between the marshy jungles of the plains and the sinister glaciers of the Himalayas. Great rivers sweeping along confusedly corpses and flowers. The incessant and stormy interpenetration of all natural phenomena that follow each other in rapid successions, alternating and contrasted. Identity of appearance and life of the three kingdoms blended by fermentation and decomposition, from the bottom of the stagnant waters to the tops of the dark trees whose splendid flowers distill the very venom of the snakes that swarm between their roots—roots that grow from the bellies of the goddesses or the bosom of the gods.

The magnificence of the wild animals, reptiles, and insects—striped skins, gemlike scales, flaming insect wings, bound, as in a divine servitude, to the most redoubtable organs of carnage or poison. Pearls in the sea, topazes, emeralds, rubies, in the sand of the rivers. Irresistible dialogues between fire, earth, water, sky, teaching despair and helplessness, the variety, the contradictions, the caprices of which force one to meditation. The glowing rocks upon which the multitudes stamp the form of the massive monsters that come to drink at the lakes swarming with crocodiles, or the flesh-eating animals that prowl in the jungle, are too chaotic and too varied in appearance to catch and fix their confused abstractions.

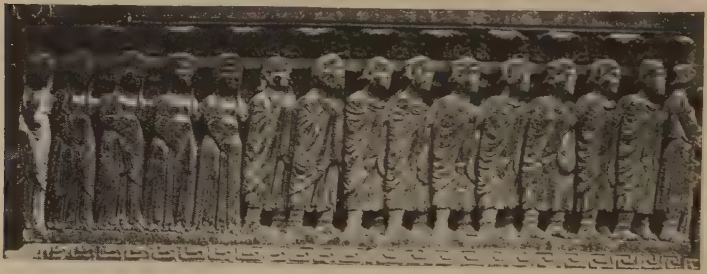

Fig. 64

Sculpture Set Against the Background (Arles)

From these abstractions the individual sometimes emerges for a second into liberty, sometimes, caught in eternal death, abandons himself to his intoxication. Sculpture, through the nature of its material and its prodigious surfaces which fanatical masses are capable of covering. Painting, through the ceaseless movement that animates this matter, bathed in constantly changing light, and molds it like paste under the feverish hand of the sculptor. The confused spirit of the great sensual religions which bring all the gods into communication and communion passes through it in copulations that seem alive, in the vines and the flowers changing into animal forms, in the hundred arms of the human monsters that scatter, during their dance, enjoyment, misery, murder, suffering, pity, oblivion.[1]

The regulating and order-bestowing spirit of Egypt the sources of which are visible in the soil, the river, and the sky, resists this acute confusion in the same fashion that it demonstrated formerly, through its contrast with Dravidian art, the law of rhythmic alternation without which it seems to me impossible to understand the history of humanity. Here in Egypt form stands out as boldly, all about the sculptor, as it is merely suggested to him there in India. Everything here seems measured in time by a clock, and in space by a unity embracing the three dimensions. An eternal mass of water flows by unceasingly, a rectangle in movement, coming from the same circular horizon, going toward the same circular horizon, alone, without tributaries, between rectilinear banks. The flood, which has stopped exactly at the same spot for hundreds of centuries, begins every year, ends every year on the same day. The sky is so clear every night that one can follow in it, from one year's end to another, the universal march of the stars. The air is so dry that everything endures there, without the least alteration.

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[1] Figs. 39, 91, 97, 131, 132, 136, 177, 178, 188, 202, 207, 216.

The engineers, the hydraulicians share with the architects, the sculptors, the idea of a motionless, spatial, geometrical milieu which a space of time measureable by arithmetic restores, like the movement of a pendulum, to the two extreme points that return every year. Add to this the desert, its undulating waves rising into salient ridges, the immense, even light, without mist, the hardness of the material demanding sincerity and simplicity of style, the Nile color of blood during the flood, the almost continual emerald of the cultivated fields, the gold of the cliffs and sands, the indigo of the sky, the burning red of the evenings. It is impossible to imagine a world determining in a more rigorous fashion the form of these undulating geometrical statues, the quality of these pure, uniform, intense colorations that saturate the walls of the temples, penetrate the stone, the wood, the metal of the sarcophagi, the caskets, trinkets, toilet articles, industrial implements.[1] Everything derives visibly from its astronomical and hydraulic régime, whatever has life, and consequently form—plant, animal, man, science, art, morality, law, death.

This, I wish to repeat, is the language of expression and nothing but expression. But when expression adapts itself to the spirit of things in a manner so strict that it seems to make one body with it, it establishes on the threshold of the problem a point of departure that is not to be escaped. It does this by resolving its abstractions into geometrical tendencies, because these geometrical aspects appear everywhere, since architecture reproduces them as well as sculpture, the works of art of the engineer as well as architecture, the ornamental paintings so sensibly symmetrical in form as well as the works of art of the engineer.

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[1] Fig. 65.

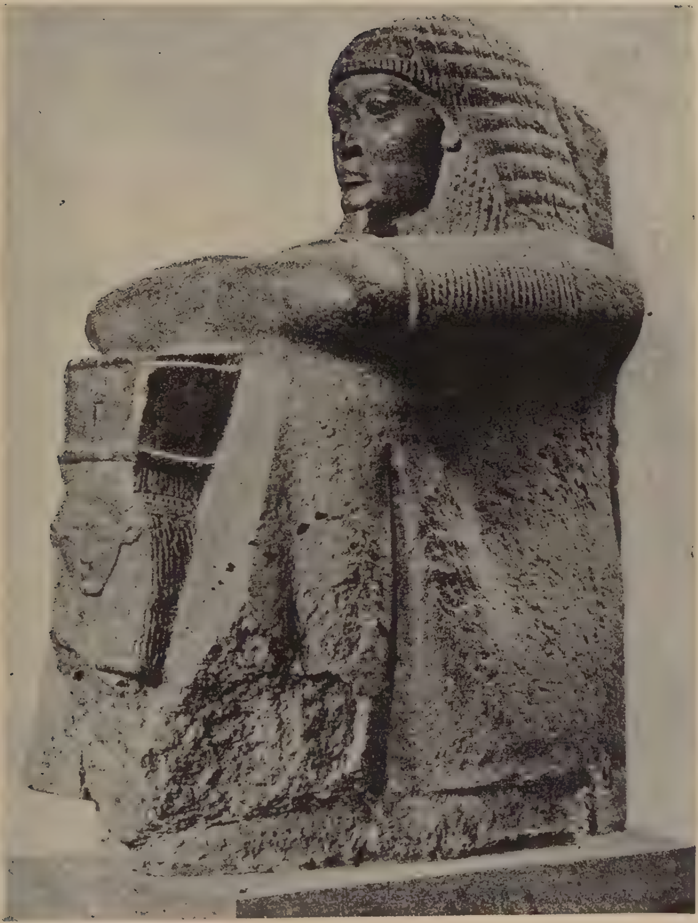

Fig. 65

Geometrical Surroundings, Cubical Sculpture (Egypt)

Man may come, no matter whence, into no matter what new country, bringing with him inner images, habits, obscure reflexes that have risen from his remote heredities, and that will make him see this country a little differently from what it is. Sometimes they will even make him modify it in order to justify this vision. It will remain no less true that as soon as man wishes to speak, the country will dictate to him, with imperious insistence, and will prescribe, in one place, not merely sculpture isolated in an open space and a universe without secrets, but it will even determine the very aspects of this sculpture. In another place it will prescribe an expression intermediary between sculpture and painting from which his most ardent efforts cannot wrest it; and elsewhere again, it will evoke the aerial, almost musical impasto of the painter, fixed or fluctuating, according to the spot that captures the spirit of space because space wills it. If we consider Egypt and India, the painting and music of the North European, the painting and the sculpture of Greece and Italy—Venice always excepted, we can go even farther.

Where the light is fixed, where the forms are few and well-defined, the seasons differentiated, the atmosphere clear, a civilization with static tendencies appears and maintains itself. Where space is confused, jumbled, full of vapors and mirages, where rain and fog prevail, where innumerable forms incessantly interpenetrate one another, an irresistible dynamism dominates and carries away the spirit.

V

Let us not forget, finally, that other elements, almost as remote as the racial determinations, almost as insistent as the rhythmic repetitions of the motives, and certainly as imperious as both, increase the complexity of the problem almost to infinity, but through this very thing, it seems to me, demonstrate its nature. Aside from the weapon, the pot, leather, musical instruments and music itself, it is difficult to conceive an art belonging to a nomad people. They move at random over the steppes, never establishing themselves where they stop to camp. They live under skin tents, rolled up and carried about, that are the evident antithesis of sedentary architecture the profile and mass of which are regulated by the geology and the atmospheric changes of a permanent milieu. They do not even imagine the decoration which, through fresco and relief, will give birth in other places to painters and sculptors.

Where, on the contrary, man establishes himself amid cultivated fields like a spider in his web, the industry of the dwelling, then of the household, then of leisure develops his primitive faculties, and, as with the deposit of a river, builds up the persistence of his monotonous daily needs. These needs, although enlarged and complicated unceasingly, preserve the common character which each day nourishes his sight, his sensations, his soul, and the living tissues that provide them with energy. Work, food and the manner of clothing himself impose a tyrannical direction on his creative energy, through their secular influence upon his daily deeds.

Take the Chinese farmer, living on rice, fruits, roots, fish: do we not find the very man in his slow, uniform art, without convulsive violences, in those great statues, calm as towers, conceived and realized without haste, in those paintings, expressing, in their dim harmonies, prolonged states of soul dominated by serenity and wisdom, in those tranquil landscapes in which there is nothing but dew at dawn, the setting of the moon over sleeping rice-fields, the murmuring of brooks about the silent villages?[1] Is there not something analogous in the art of the Egyptians, nourished on wheat and dates, an art springing up in the midst of grain, in the proximity of farms, lasting also thirty or forty centuries and never tired of cradling, in an unchanging setting, its sure and monotonous abstractions?

On the other hand, have not meat, wine, and alcohol, by increasing tenfold but also wearing out the nervous force of the European, contributed to mark his poetry, his sculpture, his painting with the dramatic character one finds in all his enterprises? Such great enterprises, but so useless in the opinion of Orientals!

Nevertheless, the contrast between these two imperative materials and the two clear-cut souls that correspond to them, would be much less surely indicated if the influence of daily occupation had not augmented the immemorial effect of food.

Food does not differ sufficiently among these two Occidental peoples—the Egyptian and the Greek—or among these two Oriental peoples—the Chinese and the Japanese—so close to one another through race and habitat, for one to be tempted to see in it too important an effect on the character of their respective geniuses. With the Chinese and the Egyptian this genius is obstinate, slow, all spiritual depth; with the Greek and the Japanese it is rapid, nervous, all direct humanity. In one case, commerce intervenes to precipitate evolution, as agriculture intervenes in the other to slacken it. Here man unceasingly changes his horizons, his interests, his interlocutors. Patient meditation gives place to critical objectivity.

The energies of the intelligence develop, become complicated, but unfortunately also foul and perverted much more quickly than elsewhere. How could trading peoples, established by the shore of the seas escape the

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[1] Fig. 41.

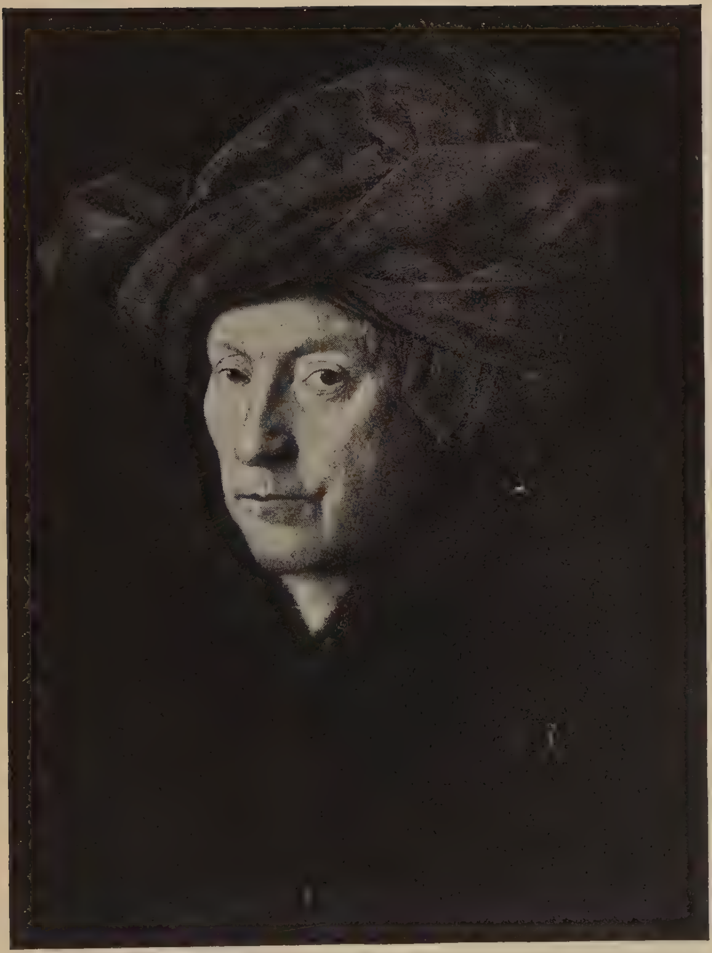

Fig. 66

Portraiture and Clothing (Van Eyck)

education of space and the waters, especially when they moved from island to island, every dawn bringing the unknown, every night brooding over the mystery, every new tribe discovered beyond the tide opening liberating outlets which constrain the ingenuity of artists to find in it resources that the monotony of the motifs had perhaps not revealed? "Nearness to the sea destroys pettiness."

The sea, so apt on the other hand to co-operate with light in order to magnify the aspects of the soil, the sky, the clouds, so alive itself through its eternal movement, its eternal sound, the swarms of creatures it rolls in its depths, has from all time played a capital rôle in change by pouring into the soul of man the taste for adventures, the mystery of departures, the violent joys of returns. The sea means ships dancing under their sails, or trembling under their smoke, constellations never seen before, fiery shores encountered when one first emerges from the fogs, the sadness of the polar regions when all one knows of the world is the shining vault over palm trees and ports, faces, exotic costumes, rich stuffs, unknown monsters, birds of gems and flame unloaded under the eyes of children. We have the same spectacle in Greece, in Holland, in Andalusia, at Venice, in Oceania, in Japan, on all the maritime horizons of France and England—in every place where a powerful poetry has wrested its secret from the world of the imagination in order to increase to infinity.

It will be objected that Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, India are too massive, too profound to be much affected by the ocean; and, indeed, except for India, where the ethnic revolution is too ardent and repeated to permit a sedentary art to develop completely, it is in these countries that we find the agricultural populations drawing from their vital necessities an art evolving

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[1] Stendhal, *Mémoires d'un touriste.*

slowly and developing through centuries, if not through millenniums, and following a rhythm so grand that it seems to ignore time. But even here, and however diminished, is there not the pulsation of commerce that has permitted these vast, apparently motionless bodies to maintain the energy necessary to search for the nourishment of their spirit? I find here immense rivers, all running toward brilliant seas, all traversed incessantly by rafts, junks, canoes, propagating the continuous drama of fecundity on their shores and borders, from one end of their course to the other, through the multitudes which their own mass preserves from dispersion.

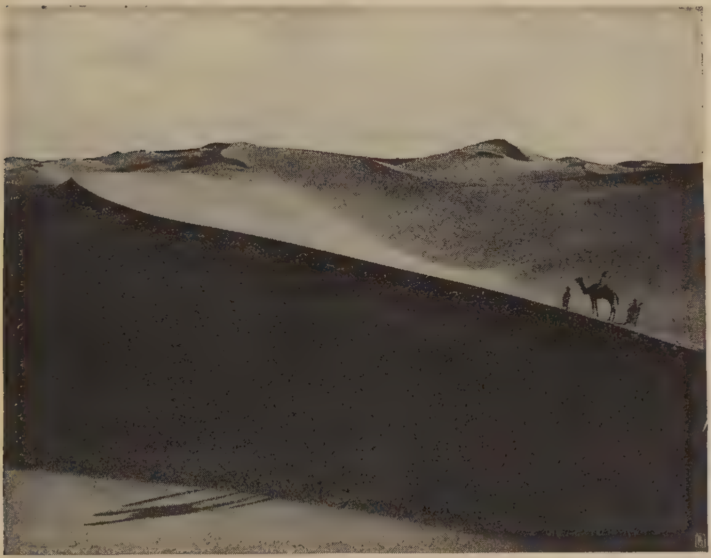

Fig. 67
Abstract Surroundings (The Desert)

This is not all. Do we not find always and everywhere the influence of clothing, its density, its neutrality, its luxury, its absence, and not merely in the external appearance of the image but in the very matter of its spiritual determinations? Flemish painting, for instance, is almost entirely at the service of the weaver, the draper, the dyer; and it develops about them in their interiors, full of luxury and shadow, in which tapestries ornament the walls, in which the gowns, the sleeves, the hoods of heavy cloth leave hardly anything uncovered but the faces and hands. Does it not owe in part to these circumstances the force of its portraits, so bony and muscular, with their solid framework, insistent faces, alone in life, one would say, on top of all this somber brilliance of furniture, hangings, and curtains? Does not the embroidered kimono, on which appear all the flowers of the country that is richest in flowers, maintain in the houses, in the streets, on the boats, the taste for the multicolored print? And does not the print, in its turn, influence the whole of Japanese art by complicating, by agitating the drama, turning it toward decorative expression rather than toward its own exaltation?

It is quite evident that the linen robe of the Egyptian fellah has not failed to encourage strongly the geometrical conception of Nilotic sculpture in which the limbs under the material only serve to favor the passage, between the three dimensions, of the subtle wave with which it surrounds the statue like continuous music. It is evident also that the bestiality of African sculpture has not been discouraged by the absence of clothing or by the rare ornaments that serve to emphasize it. Evident also that the spirituality of Arab art from which all images are banned, could not but persist in this singular ostracism when it rested on the protective coloration of the white woolen burnous which from a distance melts into the neutrality of the sand, hides from sight the faces that are often veiled as well, and

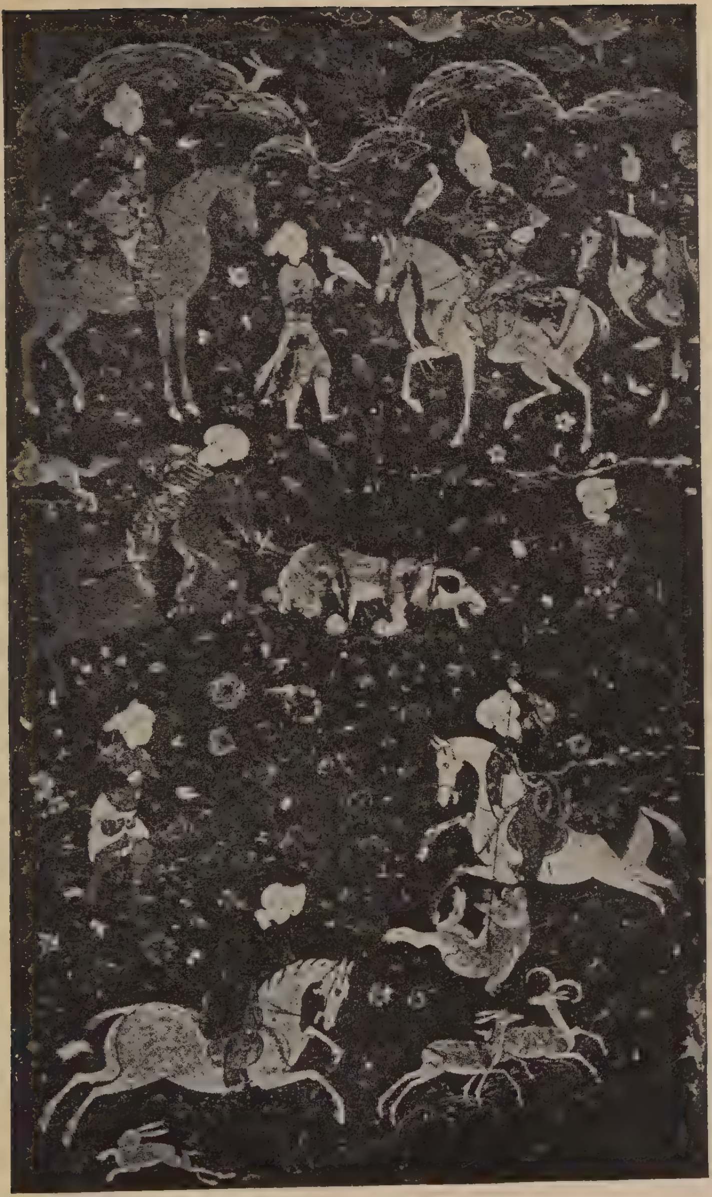

FIG. 68

ELEGANCE (Persia)

borrows from the desert its lonely monotony, so aptly suggesting, on the other hand, the abstract unity of God.[1]

It is clear that the complications of Polynesian tattooing have only been able to accelerate the blossoming of architecture and decoration that pursue and lose themselves in endless scrolls. And that the school which has determined the art of the whole Occident, and perhaps of all Asia, would not be explicable without the national games in which naked man appeared before the eyes of the crowd. This fact undoubtedly favored the rapid evolution, the sureness, and the perfection of Greek art, but in directing it toward the anatomical expression of form it engaged it in an impasse from which Europeans have almost failed to emerge.[2]

Here it is necessary to dispel an ambiguity. The great position of gymnastics has certainly given its decisive orientation to the spirit of Greek art, but one must not confuse this spirit, all proportion, and balance between the elements of the drama—which gymnastics by themselves already express well enough—with the "subject," in which that art seeks its point of departure. It is too evident that very often the environment dictates the "subject," that this is indeed its least contestable but also its least important rôle, for the Museum of Versailles, where one finds the whole story of the warlike French epopee, is much less French, in all its fifty rooms, than this cup by Chardin on the corner of a kitchen sink.[3]

When we have said, for instance, that the art of Picardy and Champagne in the Middle Ages reveals a race of farmers because it speaks especially of harvests and vintages, that Dutch art, because it preserves for us the sea, pastures, work-benches, and apothecaries' shops, expresses a race of sailors, cattle-breeders, and shopkeepers; that English art, because it takes us out walking in parks with beautiful children and gracious women, expresses a real aristocracy, we shall still scarcely know anything of the art of Champagne or Picardy, of Holland, or England. On the contrary, we shall know much of the Italian people, whose art speaks very little of everyday occupations, if we show its intellectual tendencies, its tense and passionate energy, its will for structural continuity in the drama of movement. Much of the Spanish people if we dwell more on its mysterious harmonies, its remote secret force, its taste for silence, than upon the mendicants, the cripples, and the idiots of whom it so frequently speaks to us. Much of the Assyrian people and much of the Persian people, if we compare the cruelty of the hunting and war scenes shown in the art of the first with the elegance of the hunting and war scenes shown in the art of the second.[1]

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[1] Fig. 67.

[2] Figs. 85, 208.

[3] Fig. 155.

Aztec art, I feel sure, has not left us a single one of those scenes of torture which one finds so frequently, for example, in the pictures of the peaceful burghers of Ghent or Bruges: nevertheless, it reveals to us a race of butchers.[2]

VI

Here, then, we have a motif, renewed or always the same, but in any case full of accent. Here is a garment remaining quite as suggestive as it was twenty centuries ago, a food that has continued since time immemorial its slow and persistent action. Here is a human group

[1] Figs. 68, 69.

[2] Fig. 55.

quick to receive images, through the infusion of the black ferment once poured into its veins. Here is always the sea, the great civilizer. We see the eternal light, or the illumined fog. Why is it not legitimate that the incessant solicitations exercised upon man by the environment should always lead man to respond intelligently to the environment?

The human miracle is woven of fatalities so inextricable that the illusion of sudden liberty which it gives us cannot be explained except as the supreme fatality. A prodigious chain of diverse circumstances is necessary in order that here or there, on this day rather than on some other, the flame of creation should arise at the summit of an irresistible wave, borne on by curiosity, confidence, the ardor of living, and the spirit of conquest.

It is necessary that all possible forms of spiritual and practical energy should move groups of men enjoying the unusual privileges of which we have spoken, in order that they should be able to exchange with neighboring groups the products of industry by means of commerce and such collective passions on the march as caravans, fleets, migrations, and armies. It is necessary that the sense of drama should have been preserved in the heart of the individual by the alternation of victory with defeat, poverty with wealth, mysticism with criticism, appearing neither too close together nor too far apart, neither too easy nor too brutal. Imagine, for instance, food appearing of its own accord, a mild climate where no effort is necessary to secure the former or evade the latter, or, on the other hand, a climate too harsh, food too scarce, requiring in order to combat the former and seek the latter exhausting labors that do not leave a second for rest or leisure: where would meditation and enthusiasm have been able to take root?

Suppose again that only a few families people the imperious lands that we know to be indispensable to the complete expansion of the genius of individuals. Whatever might be the solicitations of the secret cadences that rhythm the flow of their blood, would they have time to increase, multiply, become a city, a nation? Precisely at the hour when the bud was about to open, would they not see some conquering horde appear that crushed it as it passed by? But perhaps at the same

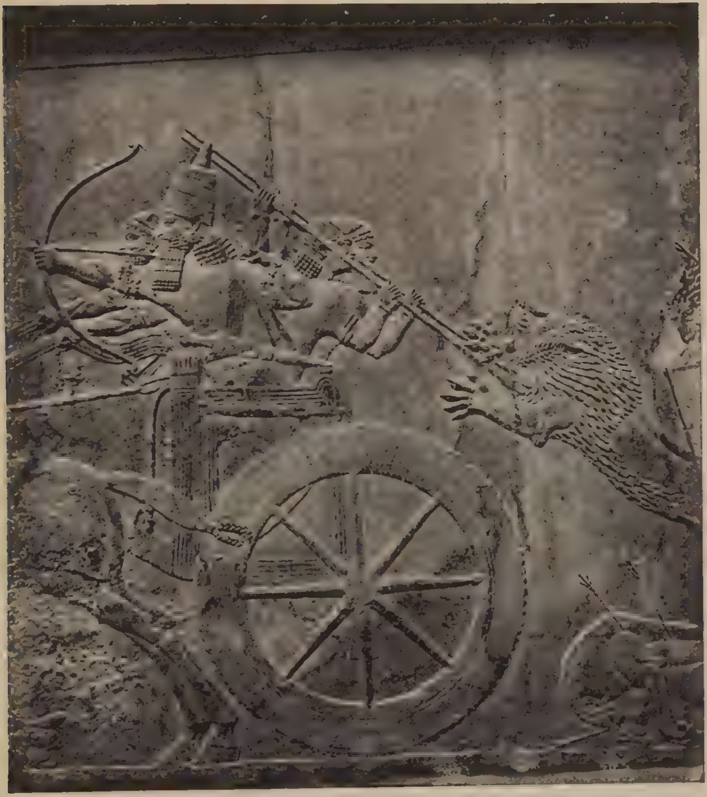

Fig. 69

Cruelty (Assyria)

time, through one of those paradoxes that history sometimes offers, that horde would bring to those living on the other side of the mountains the spiritual revelation of defeat or domination. Even if these few families become a city, then a nation, would they be sufficiently in relation with their neighbors, through books and merchandise, through trade and war, to develop the curiosity and inventiveness necessary to make a confrontation between their environment and the universe within them?

Take some immense space, Siberia or Brazil. Imagine it endowed, in its ordinary aspects, with every possible magnificence—austere or laughing, no matter which—forms, vegetation, dramas of the sky, dramas of the waters. If these groups, separated by almost impassable savannahs, by impenetrable forests, cannot come into contact with one another, if man here remains always cantoned in the same spot, never hearing the voices of other men, never meeting their glances, never comparing his products and his ideas with theirs, the monotony of his representations, the rarity of his images would fail to give him a new relation or an unforeseen association that could serve as a springboard for his creative flight. Is not that what happened to the Russians, for instance, scattered for fifteen centuries on their marshy steppes until a profound stir, vague but more and more extended, gave them a wavering consciousness of their intimate reality through the despairing voices of their novelists and their musicians?

Why, finally, since it could be born, did the miracle have to die? Environments change little, men change scarcely at all. Although it has remained on the same terrain, the apple tree that was covered with fruit last season does not bear a single apple this year: have we the right to conclude from this that it is not the same apple tree? When one sees the decay of Greece after

Alexander, or only after Byzantium, one may well wonder by what chance it suddenly blossomed some thirty centuries ago.

To show its rocks, its light, its women bearing on their heads the burdens that oblige them to walk erect, like the caryatides of the Erechtheum, its same people, turbulent, versatile, mischief-making, ungrateful, infatuated with politics and commerce, is to mention appearances that have not remained the spiritual realities they once were. To reply that it was at the crossroads of the Old World, at the place that formed the common highway of all the civilizations—Ionic, Syrian, Phœnician, Egyptian, Pelasgic, Italic, Celtic—to which its sailors and its merchants served as courtiers and middlemen, this signifies only that these conditions favored a possible flowering. But what other conditions it had to fulfill!

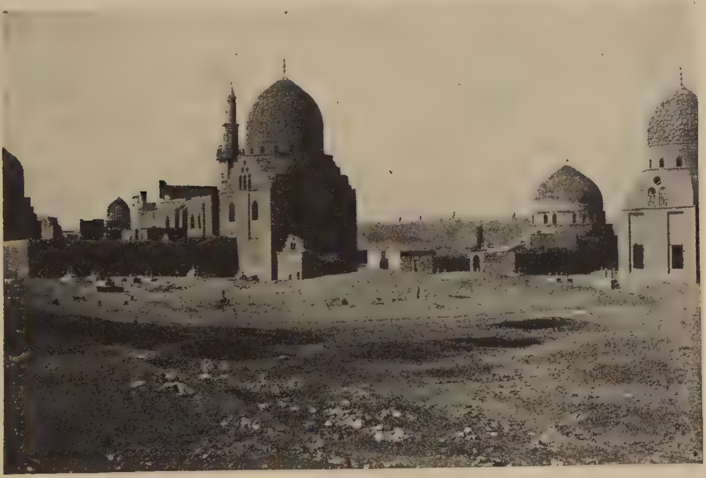

Fig. 70

Minarets and Cupolas (Islam)

The instant must have been very fugitive when everything concurred so that the energy of the developing race might express itself by methods that were, as a matter of fact, very natural. There was the weakness of the foreign peoples, all of whom had reached the supreme point of their own civilization and deposited their seed in the cradle of the newly-born. This seed, in contact with its virgin forces, acquired a powerful vitality, increased by contact with neighboring seeds. Then Greece possessed qualities of a singular receptivity, assimilativeness and insistence that could only appear once, at least under this form, one in which chance, that is to say circumstances too complex for analysis, played the capital rôle. There was the encounter of two principal races, one bronzed, the other white, one disembarked from the sea, the other descended from the mountains, that embraced even while they fought, and whose virility and sensuality fecundated one another.

There was unity of religion, philosophy, social, and political aspirations that coincided with the culminating point of the forces of realization, expansion, and conquest. All these are conditions which, if only one is lacking, can cause the immediate collapse of the edifice when it is scarcely begun, a thing that happened, for instance, with the primitive Roman art that was too clumsy to resist Greece, which had come into contact with it too soon. Elsewhere, in Holland, for instance, where the great art did not last a century, we are surprised to find the explosion that occurs. At that moment, liberty conquered by arms, meets with the consecutive development of the individuality proper to a people, and with its economic prosperity, of which it had the right to dispose for the first time. Then, although this liberty, this development, this prosperity continue, artistic energy disappears, perhaps under the influence of acquired wealth, at the same time that the sources of its victorious conquest disappear in the daily drama of war and revolution.

Or else, as in Spain, we see the collapse of the creative faculty along with the collapse of political power and the substitution for conquering virility of an easy enrichment among the vanquished peoples overseas who have been ground down, fleeced, and pillaged. Or else, as in Italy, there is the quick rise of this faculty in the growth of cities delivered over to the most ferocious passions, cities that wore themselves out and were destroyed with the same rapidity and the same violence as occurs in love, leaving nothing but ashes. Or else, as in Germany, there is an event of capital importance —the Reformation—followed by two hundred years of wars that break its spirit in the heydey of its youth and cast it into an abyss of suffering, from which music is finally to rise.

In this domain one can only make statements of what has occurred. It is not possible to follow all the circumstances of the evolution of peoples whose creative inspiration was only a moment of that evolution, although indeed the most impressive moment, and sometimes capable of a power of renewal that seems almost inexhaustible. This was the case of Egypt, for instance, isolated among the ancient peoples in an oasis that could only be reached by crossing immense expanses of water or sand, and yet not so isolated but that, once every two or three centuries, some invasion within the country, some expedition against other Powers, came to agitate the creative sources and give renewed strength to the energies of the spirit.

It was also true of China, whose history is sufficiently similar from this double point of view of relative isolation and renewals as profound as they were rare. And even true of France, the only one among the nations of

Europe to maintain its creative level almost without interruption for ten centuries. Because, no doubt, like Greece of old, France is at the crossroads of the peoples, cross-fertilized in every sense by their spirits, thanks to books, merchandise, war, or through books, merchandise, war, renewing abroad the sources and the stamp of its own self.

Nothing else resembles so much the ripening of fruits, sometimes sudden and followed by a rapid decay, elsewhere slow, almost torpid, but long preserving their savor, covering this tree to the breaking-point this season, entirely lacking the following season, or appearing regularly during several years—sometimes awaited in vain during the whole life of the tree and never appearing at all. Every aspect of earth and sky blend in it, the qualities of this earth and the caprices of this sky, the unexpected flood, exceptional drought, cyclones, the passage of destructive insects, maladies that have come from without, natural senility when there have been no graftings and crossings.

Suppose some religion arouses this inert people, suddenly opens its eyes after having stirred its lungs and its heart, and admits to it, in a great lyric tumult, the solicitations of the country which it inhabits but has not yet considered. Then we have the priests of Buddha spreading over China, Indo-China, the East Indies, Korea, Japan a flood of charming enthusiasms that fills the mountain grottoes with flowers, carves forests in stone, and peoples the edges of the roads with smiling colossi.

We have the horsemen of Islam sowing such rapture among the vanquished peoples that in a few years enameled mosques, sharp minarets, cold cisterns protected by heavy vaults and surrounded with gardens will spring up in the tracks of their horses. We have the peoples of the Occident finding in Catholicism a moral

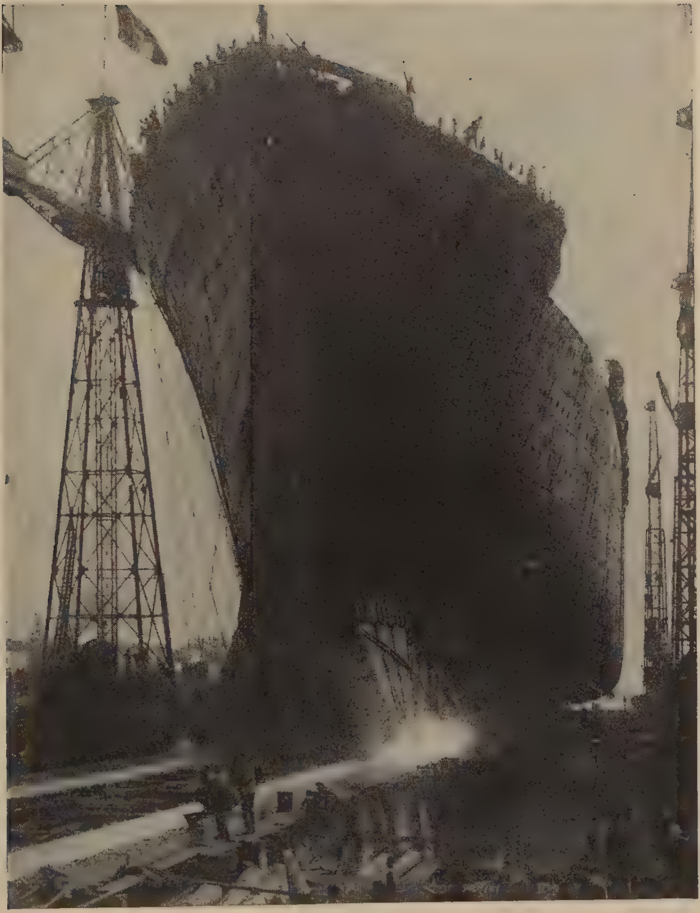

Fig. 71

Naval Architecture (The Roma)

pretext for glorifying the beauty of their women, the strength of their soldiers, the opulence of their fields, and the wealth of their trades.

Suppose some war stirs the hidden springs of this other somnolent people, obliges it to evolve the drama of creation from the drama of its life: then we have the sudden fusion, when the Medes have hardly left, of the Ionic current, the Dorian current, in the powerful Attic form; we have India awakening after the armies of Alexander have come into contact with it; we have the sudden rise of Holland, Flanders, Spain, of French romanticism.

Suppose some other war occurs, so cruel, so long or accompanied by such carnage that it cuts down to the very roots all impulse toward the future: we have Mycenæan Greece after the invasion of the Dorians, France after the Hundred Years' War, Germany after the Three Hundred Years' War, America after the Revolution.

Or, somewhere else, a more or less rapid rupture of equilibrium that breaks the association of the creative elements and delivers over to wealth, or to intelligence, or to sensuality, or to asceticism, an authority out of proportion to its necessary rôle. We have the convulsions of the Greek city appearing in the dissolution of the unity of the statue. We have Christianity breaking the pagan idol after having adopted its supreme teachings, as, a few centuries later, the Christian idols will be broken by the Christian. We have the slow weakening of the supports of the cathedral as the strength of the corporations decays and diminishes, rent asunder by the economic individualism that grows greater from day to day.

The creative energy of a people taken at haphazard is no doubt only one aspect of its general energy. Art, which is a way of speaking, is also a way of acting, but

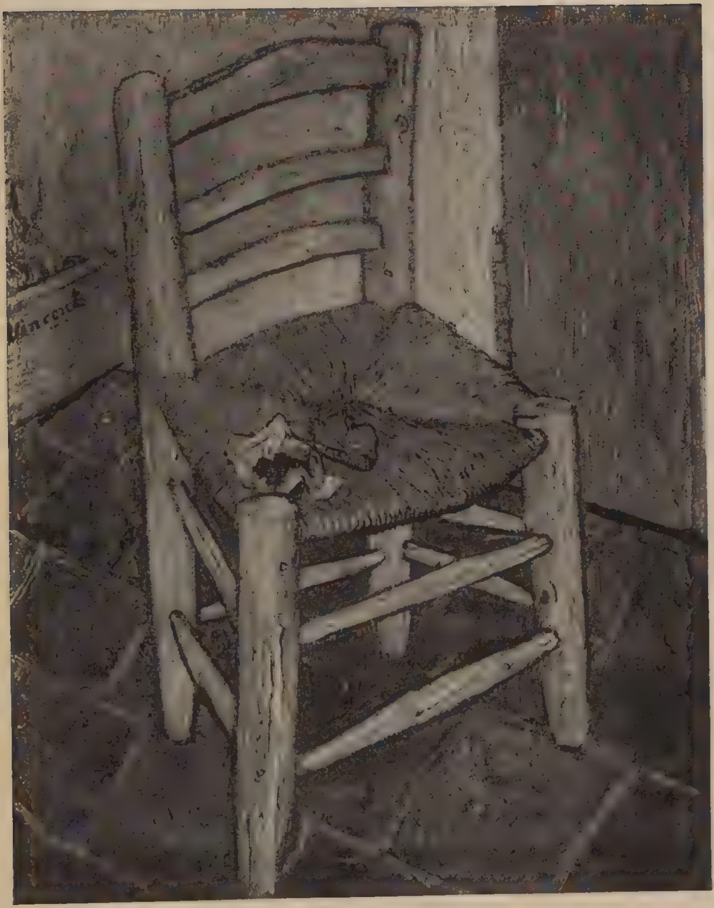

Fig. 72

Van Gogh

there are others—industry, commerce, political domination, the order imposed upon neighbors. The development of the intelligence, of method, security, and well-being can, according to circumstances, produce maturity or impede it. It seems, at bottom, as if all these things were only attributes of a unique force that is born, grows, becomes conscious of itself, bursts forth in the course of the irresistible ascension of a certain group, and commands it to seize and perfect the form of expression that is proper to it.

It has been said, for instance, that a people's most invariable sign of power—luxury—"summons the arts." This is to take the effect for the cause. Luxury is, like art, a sign of ripening. It acknowledges the same origins, grows and develops at the same instant, and, after having favored "the arts" during a brief moment, contributes more than anything else to dissociate and corrupt them. Neither Greek art, nor Italian art, nor French art in the Middle Ages, nor Dutch art, nor English art, nor Spanish art, produced by the growth of those spiritual energies from which wealth arose at the same time, were able to resist the increasing wealth of Greece, Italy, France, Holland, England, and Spain. And yet, while the energy of Greece, Italy, or Spain declined with wealth and dragged art into its decadence, it does not seem as if English energy had sensibly diminished—at least up to the twentieth century—since the century of Shakespeare which is, in the domain of the spirit, the greatest of English centuries.

It does not seem as if German energy had weakened after Wagner and Nietzsche; on the contrary, it seems to have grown greater. And yet, after Wagner and Nietzsche, German art almost disappeared. The energy of Holland has maintained itself since the seventeenth century. And yet, since the unique miracle of that century, Holland has not produced a single great painter, with the exception, in our own day, of Van Gogh.[1]

On the other hand, Italian energy, so long languid and drooping, has appeared during the last few years as one of the elements that gives modern Europe the most character. And yet, while admitting that its industrial architecture—factories, docks, automobiles, airplanes, ships[2]—is not precisely the new form of expression which its mission is to bring, we could seek in vain, in its present creations, something equivalent to the productions of a single one among its small towns of the Quattrocento.

In the Spain of Charles IV, so ruined, so devastated, so somnolent, how explain the meteor Goya, if the energy that hurled Spain against Napoleon at the same period is not something latent in it, ready to burst forth into action at the moment when one imagines it dying or dead? And how define Oriental energy, in China, in India, and Islam, when it chooses precisely the instant in which it reaches its peak to proclaim in its very art, which is its highest symbol, the uselessness of this energy and the vanity of this art? Mystery! Nothing can mark in advance the hour when a certain people will reach the most favorable moment of its historical evolution and take possession of its geographical milieu, or foretell how it will take possession of it.

VII

The confrontation of the systems of Taine and Gobineau leads us meanwhile to a freshly visioned image of the æsthetic adventure of man, provided we consent to retouch them both and relate them, all living and mingled together, with the extent of time of which neither the one nor the other takes sufficient account. Gobineau certainly perceived that the primitive milieu might have modeled his races—the rough life, the cold, the mountain air determining the energy of the white in the wholesomeness of his mutual aid and daily effort, the persistent utilization of the nourishing alluvion determining the practical and surly somnolence of the yellow, the warmth, the light, the fever of the luxuriant forest with its fiery birds determining the sensuality and the lyricism of the black.

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[1] Fig. 72.

[2] Fig. 71.

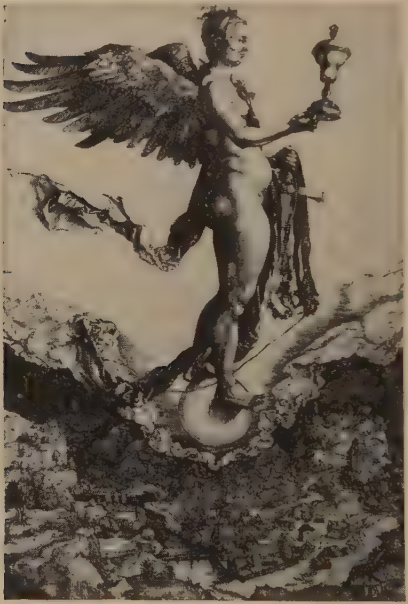

FIG. 73

SURROUNDINGS AND WORK OF SENTIMENT (Durer)

But why did he not understand that the ethnic mixture, whose faults he denounces, marks the change toward freer forms of the moral disciplines that were judged by him necessary for the development of his imaginary abstract man? Such a change was inevitable because of the constant influence of the variations of the milieu upon the variations of man. They explain how primitive races may be adapted to the new milieu to which migrations, war, and slavery transport them. Also, it is in order to let the descendants of these races live in the new surroundings that the mixture of bloods in such a milieu takes place almost automatically.

And it is from the very biological drama aroused by these mixtures that not only civilization is born but the civilizations.

The inner struggle between practical interest, will, and sensuality arouses in those in whom it takes place the imperious desire to realize their accord and sometimes brings this desire to a successful conclusion. I do not dream of denying the disorders which a too great and too sudden influx of black blood can arouse in the moral equilibrium of a yellow or white race. But it is enough for this race, after the first shock, to stabilize itself in some favorable environment for a great spiritual impulse to be born and to create in it a superior form of culture hitherto unknown.

The concept "civilization" cannot then long blind us to the æsthetic fact that determines the form of expression of the mixtures of races as we have observed them. The images they leave us are only a harmony conquered between their inner universe and the external universe that has more or less changed. Wherever we look there exists between the milieu and man a necessary harmony that constrains them to reciprocal dominations and servitudes from which its average image cannot but emerge. What makes the image so tormented is precisely the anxiety to maintain this harmony, in spite of everything, while the variations of the ethnic minglings run the risk of confusing or destroying it at every instant. If the race provides the spirit, the milieu provides the image, and the drama of art turns about the point of equilibrium in which this spirit and this image are forced to reach an agreement.

The new arrivals, be it understood, bring from the depths of their race the subconscious landscapes, the passions, and the habits which, in their turn, act, by means of successive generations, on the vision, customs, and passions of the aboriginal population. But nothing can prevent either from having eyes to see. The white species remains powerless to develop a plastic genius if the milieu does not suggest it through its light and its visible framework, and if its black strain is not sufficiently pronounced for the sense of rhythm that characterized the black to be fused in some way with the sense of abstract order that characterizes the white.

The example of Germany is typical from this point of view, with its dull and especially its disconnected images, like the German landscape itself. But in this race there is a fusion of elements flowing in from distant roots that have pushed their tentacles into the Southern regions and the Rhenish provinces, melan-

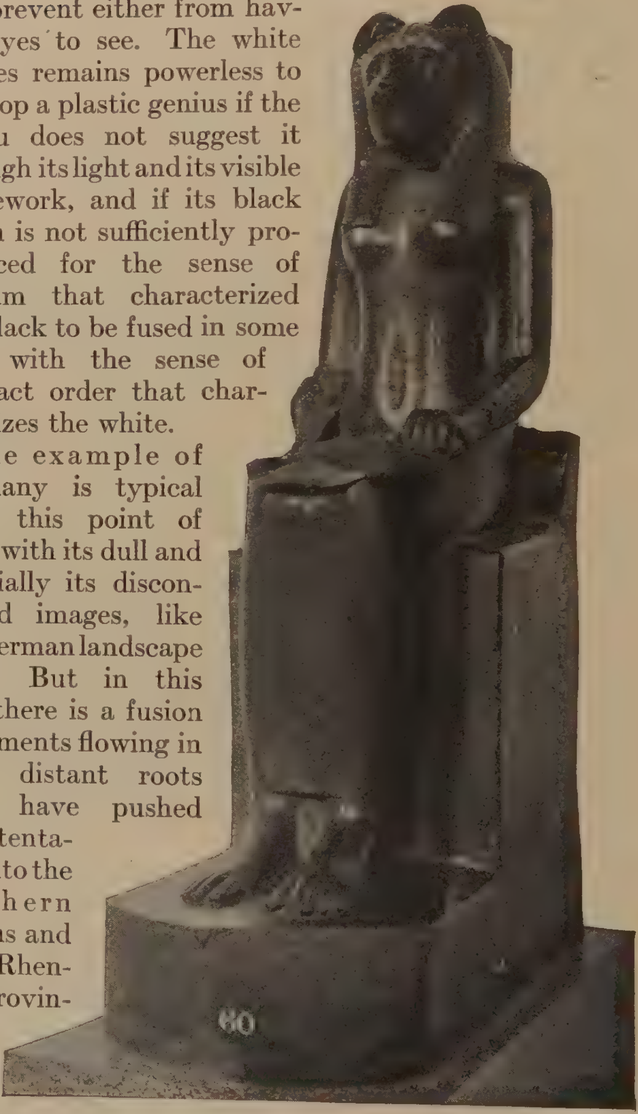

Fig. 74
Cruel God (Egypt)

ized for centuries through the valley of the Danube and the long sojourn of the Legions. And so German fervor forgets the want of harmony of the geographical milieu in order to take refuge in an interpretation of the objects that appeal to the sentiment of man more than to his reasoning.[1] And this is far from being the only case.

We have seen the impossibility of selecting which hampers the Hindus with their too rich strain of black blood and who are moreover swept away by a torrent of colors and forms that are subjected by the climate to incessant changes. The Greeks will teach us their accord with the clearest, the least variable, and the most harmonious of landscapes, an accord conquered over the passions by a race composed in happy proportions of the impulsive violence of the black and the noble sense of order of the white. Amid the incessant drama of revolutions and wars, this harmony occurs even in its symbols carved by the Greeks, Apollo rising from the very carnage to introduce eurythmy into its disorderly gestures.[2]

The Italians, in whom the ethnic drama is at least as terrible, will express it in an art that is more feverish and more tormented and is sometimes wild, carried away beyond its proper limits and moreover marked by Christianity, overwhelmed by the convulsions of cities, but subjected to the discipline of a writing inspired by the bold certitude of silhouettes against the sky, and by the nerve and vigor of the bony structure of the earth. The Dutch, in whom the black share is reduced to a few drops, just enough for their brief and magnificent outburst, will not find any difficulty in bringing into harmonious relationship the enthusiasm which their inner strength gives them and their calm, copious visions, seasoned with the lively colors that play over the mist.

[1] Fig. 73. [2] Fig. 1.

Among the French, we shall observe a more complex spectacle, due to the situation occupied by their country, which is dominated by the influence now of the German tribes coming down from the North and the East by way of the Oise and the Marne, now of the Mediterraneans ascending from the South along the Rhone and the Seine: on the one hand we have a formal art, very prosaic, which will be called Romanesque or classic according as the chief influence is religious or laic; on the other hand a more floating, musical, picturesque art in which sentiment prevails and which later will be called Gothic—as if one divined its far-away sources, although it is very national; or it will be called romantic, when the German wars once more start the current flowing from the Northeast. But both arts remain in harmony with the aspects of the soil, either through their repressed lyricism, their measure, their sensibly symmetrical cadences that respond to the ordered arrangement of the plowed lands, to the low little hills, the meadows bordered with lines of trees, the moderate character of the climate and the seasons, or through their conquest of space, their moving surfaces, their broken and varied color responding to the majestic, clear height of the forests, to the animation of the leaves and pastures under the passage of the wind and to the mildness of the light over the tiles and waters.[1] Everywhere, in India, in Greece, in Italy, in Holland, in France, there is a triple drama to be resolved in the consciousness of the creator: the conflict of races, the tyranny of circumstances, the influence of milieus.

Now imagine the white represented by the Semite, or thoroughly mingled with him. You will observe, in Europe as in Asia, a similar spectacle, but one that assumes, both here and there, a particular accent.

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[1] Figs. 30, 53, 63, 88, 106, 121, 129, 178, 217.

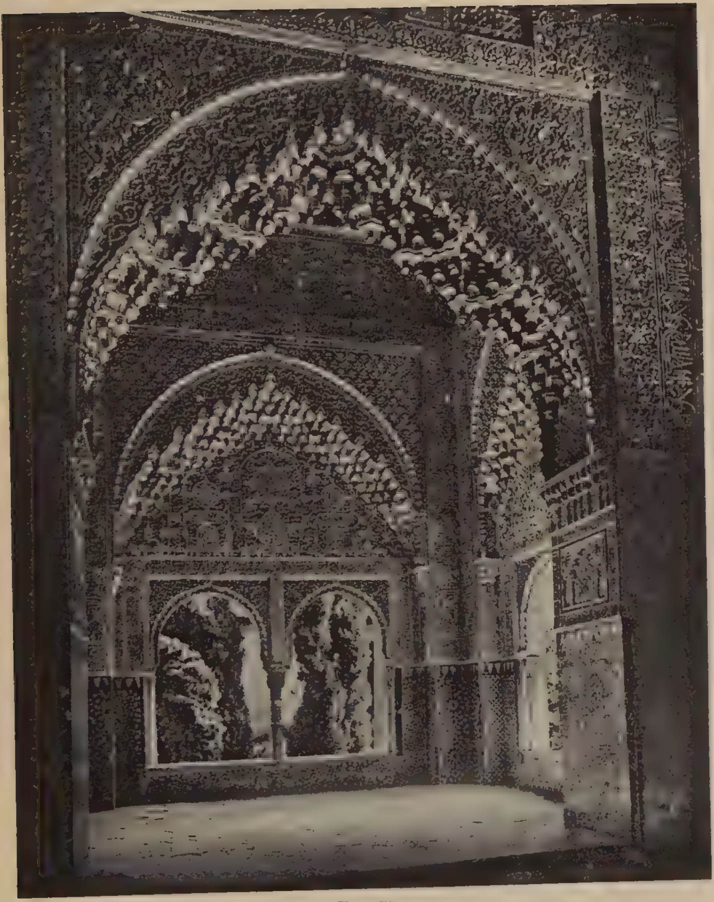

Fig. 75

Cruel Decoration (Alhambra)

Cruelty, going frequently as far as self-immolation, characterizes the race. So long as it remains pure, as incapable as the Aryan branch of giving plastic form to the idol, it hates this idol, and perhaps for this very reason.

As soon as a little black blood has penetrated its veins it takes vengeance upon the idol, and through it, by attaching to its aspects, sometimes to its functions, a character of cruelty. The Phœnicians, after having piled up children in the idols, heated their iron gods till they glowed. Wherever it is present one quickly catches the mark of this sadism. Save in the case of the Egyptians, among whom decoration was determined by the richness of the oasis, but whose geometrical characters no doubt contributed to show, in the mass and density of their colossi, in the hermetism of their temples, bare as ramparts, a little of the Semite's zeal to affirm his spiritual royalty, perhaps even a little of his ferocity in the hawk and panther heads of their gods.[1] It is true that we cannot tell whether it is the blood that demands it, or the environment that is everywhere equally ungrateful. In Assyria,[2] an unstable autocracy ceaselessly at war, glories in cutting off hands, tearing out eyes, breaking heads, boiling people alive. Wild animals come down incessantly from the mountains to decimate the flocks. There is a less regular régime of fertilizing floods than in Egypt, an unwholesome slime, polar nights, atrocious heat during the day. About the path of the Arab[3] lie stretches of burning sand in which thirst and sunstroke prevail, for the coolness of waters and palms is reserved for the warlike aristocracy that kidnaps and shuts up the wives and daughters of the conquered. In Spain,

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[1] Fig. 74.

[2] Figs. 69, 193.

[3] Figs. 67, 70, 75.

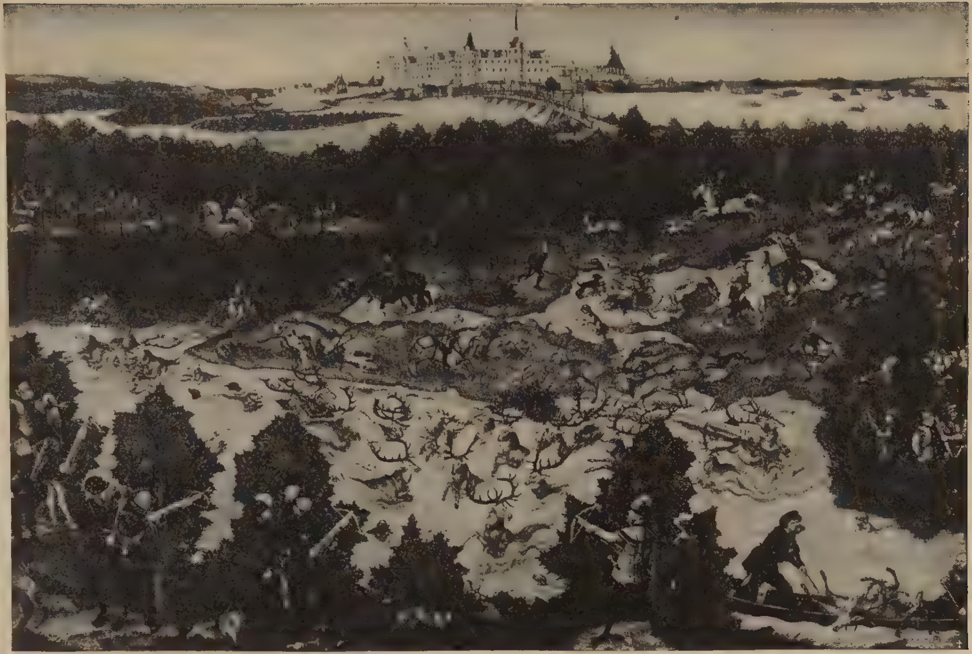

Fig. 76

Musical Painting (Cranach)

we have aridity, the wind torrid one day, glacial the day after, the Inquisition tracking the spirit even into the utmost privacy and silence, political extortion, sanguinary games, a fearful aspiration to asceticism and death.[1]

In all these places the art is ferocious.

In Assyria it parades murder which it describes with a naïve thoroughness—crunching jaws, tearing claws, spears piercing lungs and skulls, wounded animals dragging themselves along on their dead limbs, corpses heaped up and strewn about everywhere. In Arabia, there is the absolute interdiction to express the living form, the enervating arabesque forbidding the dream to take shape anywhere, the cold shadow where sparkles against a background of clotted blood, the carvings and the enamels on the handles of daggers, this raucous song, a leather cord stretched and twisted as if to cut the larynx, and, here in Spain, finally, we have these sinister images of torture and suffering, the cruelty and the sadness of which are even more accentuated by a bleeding rose, a glistening pearl, the shimmer of satin, the down of powdered flesh.

When the Semite does not mingle with the conquered or cannot impose upon them his controlled domination, when he remains apart, on the margin of the peoples, powerless to destroy them, aspiring to direct them, his obstinate apostleship maintains between them and in themselves an atmosphere of combat that forbids them to rest. Aside from his Scripture, the strongest and the most poetic that exists, it is true, we know of no monument, statue, fresco, painting, not even the most insignificant wrought object that belongs to him. One would say that he alone serves as a counterbalance to the need that other men have of expanding and living again in the image they make of their charming or pitiless passions, an image at which he sneers, or which he buys or sells, as if disparaging it. Wherever the Semite is, the idol is most accentuated or rather most irrepressible, whether he pretends to conceive, forbid or ignore it.

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[1] Figs. 80, 185, 210.

VIII

This search for an accord between his environment and his race is, for the creator, the imperative necessity that he pursues through all its forms of expression, transposing invincibly from one form of expression to another the essential tendencies which this accord demands of him. And this is so whether his race is mixed or otherwise, and whether or not it brings with it inner landscapes from its primitive habitats. I mean that if it appears under the form of architecture, the artist will instinctively carry the accord over into painting, literature, music, architectural rhythms. That if it appears under the form of music, everything, architecture, painting and literature, will assume a musical character, that everything will have a meaning plainly expressible in words alone if it is through the genius of the word that the race is tormented.

This, we have seen, is very apparent among the English, harried though they are by the Celtic dreamer and the Saxon mystic, who hatch in their rich imagination colloquies of the skies, the forests, the nights, the oceans. Had they been more truly and wholesomely painters, they would perhaps have succeeded in introducing these things into their painting, as they introduce them into their poems in Spenser and Shakespeare, in Milton and the Lake Poets, in Byron and Shelley. At least they have unceasingly attempted to do so. About Turner,[1] as well as before him and after him, there are enchantments of light and shadow in the ponds, the forests, the muddy roads, and the rainy skies of Gainsborough, Crome, Reynolds, Constable, and scintillations, illuminations, specter-like and dying gleams amid the glooms of Whistler.

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[1] Fig. 84.

We see the same thing everywhere, and it must be observed that the fact persists in all the harmonies that occur between man and his environment, whatever may be the ethnic mixtures that transform the ideas and transfigure the images during centuries, often during millenniums. We know the attitude of Egyptian art, refusing to change its architectural rhythm during five or six thousand years in spite of invasions and distant expeditions, religious and political commotions, and the crises of realism, idealism, or academism, all of which are very visible under the apparent uniformity of the temples, statues, carvings in low relief, and all the usual objects collected in the tombs.

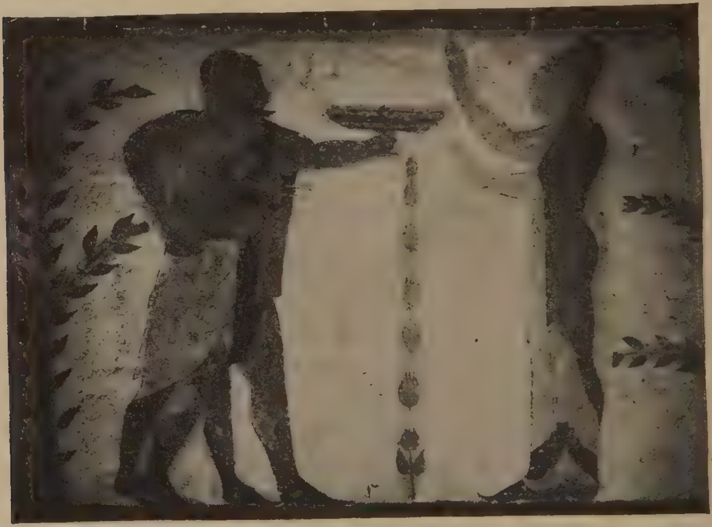

Fig. 77
Etruscan Fresco

One may look back to the earliest times of Hindu art and the art of the East Indies, covered over with heavy deposits through migrations, infiltrations, and passing armies, and, throughout their decadences and their eclipses, one still finds their permanent characteristics of pantheistic interpenetration of forms, foundations, lights, shadows, which are common not only to sculpture but to architecture itself, and to the poems and the concepts of the mystics and thinkers. Follow, throughout all epochs, the invincible vitality of the German genius for music, since the Nibelungenlied and the Mastersingers, up to the great line, Händel, Bach, Haydn, Glück, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Wagner, who correspond to Luther, Herder,

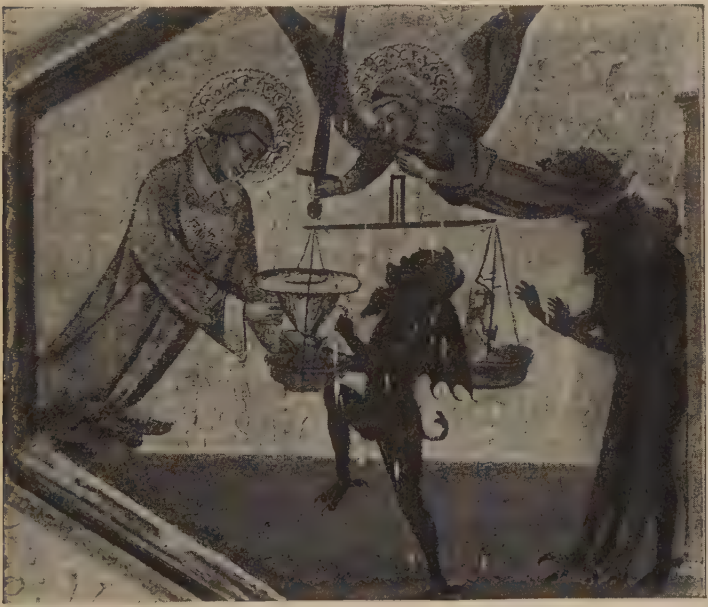

Fig. 78

Tuscan Fresco

Goethe, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, by interlacing the sonorous arabesques of music with the meanderings of a thought carried, through a synthetic language, into arbitrary symbols, of which pure music is the highest expression.

For countless generations loosely connected images, arousing sentiments rather than ideas and forms, have circulated subterraneously in the German. When his passion and will gain the victory over the rich confusion of his inner universe, he confides these sentiments to the evocative power of the orchestra. If he attempts another form of expression, it is still music that one finds in that singular harmony that fills and animates the landscapes of Cranach, Dürer, Altdorfer, those evokers of sounds, vibrations, murmurs, changing appearances. Their works are filled with scattered episodes where a stray bone, a tuft of grass, a flower, a little creature flying over the surface of a pond assumes an importance equal to that of the mountain on the horizon, the fortress sleeping by the river, the man and woman whose paradise is there. Like the musical Chinese paintings, these are states of mind—a state of the soul which the play of the ogives, the nerves, the rose-windows in the thirteenth century temple, cannot transform into architectural rhythms save in contact with the French genius.

It is the function of this genius to give to whatever it touches the form of architecture. Thus for ten centuries —up to the revolution that destroyed the corporations and social architecture—it has been able to maintain in houses, markets, and churches its qualities as a builder.

Observe, from Notre Dame to the palaces of Mansard and Gabriel, its invincible tendency to see a building as a slightly elevated central body, between two higher aisles, where the clear play of the verticals and the horizontals gives life and liberty to the obvious sym-

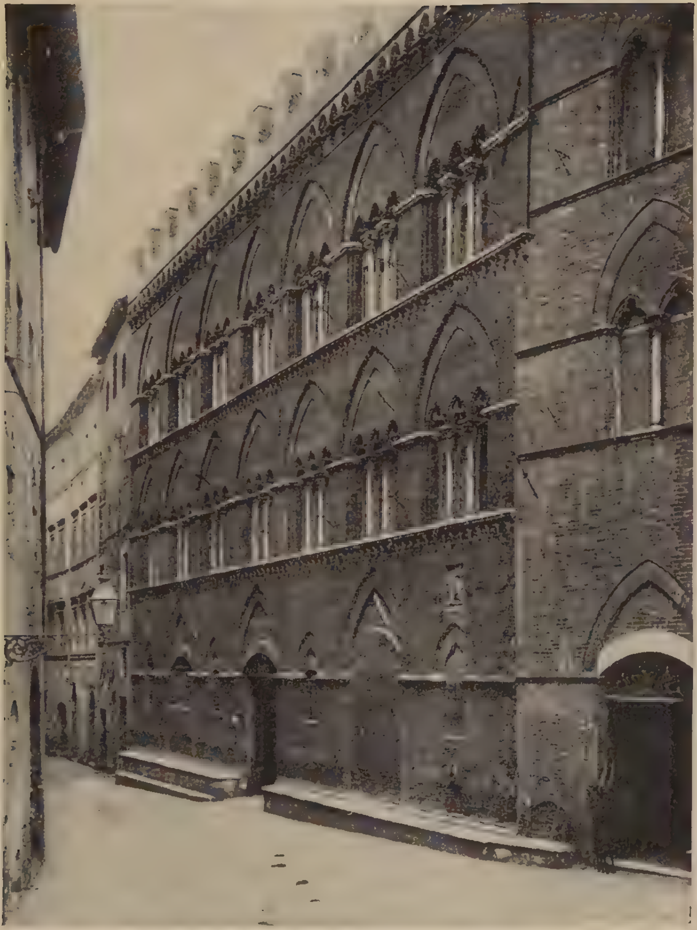

Fig. 79

Architectonic Decoration (Siena)

metry. Seek this almost miraculous accord between the subject and the object, this familiar communion with the average soul of things, this sort of modesty in effacing itself behind their work that characterizes Corot as well as Chardin, La Fontaine as well as Villon, Corneille de Lyon as well as the Clouets, Fouquet as well as the image-makers of Picardy and Champagne. Here the painters and sculptors that are most clearly French—Fouquet, Froment d'Avignon, Poussin, Claude Lorrain, Girardon, Le Nain, Chardin, Barye, Corot, Seurat—neglect the sensual play of reflected light upon the medium and seek first to establish the form through its essential and average framework, the form that endures and is evident the moment one wishes truly to see it.

The gardener realizes an architectural plan with his straight alleys bordered with clipped trees, his circles in the woods, his geometrical ponds, his cascades and water-jets as regular as the walls. The Alexandrine of the poet, with its alternating rhymes and its monotonous cæsura, as well as the three unities of tragedy, give to the verbal expression an apparent symmetry that forces the drama of the passions to remain behind its façade.

Philosophy directs all thought into the paths of a rigorous method with which even the reasoning of even the freest minds have remained impregnated ever since the balance of Montaigne, the well-rounded aphorisms of La Rochefoucauld, the diametrical aphorisms of Pascal, up to the luminous edifices of Voltaire, nervous, scintillating with innumerable little windows like a palace by Gabriel. Nothing resembles a wall of Vauban like the impeccable logic of a work of Turenne or the powerful cadences of an opera of Rameau.

Observe now the persistence of the ancient Etruscan genius, although enervated, broken, meager, tracing sinister scenes, in the "Triumph of Death" of the

Campo Santo of Pisa, the Spanish Chapel at Florence, the tormented, drawn, violent forms of Della Quercia, Donatello, Lippi, Botticelli, and Verrocchio, in the bizarre visions of da Vinci, the hell into which Signorelli and Michael Angelo hurl their flayed figures.[1] Note that all this, even when shut up in the darkness of a tomb, is almost always painted on a wall, so that the eye can seize at once, and altogether, the passionate imagination shown in the crowds of dead and living.

The Italian is a decorator, but in the most human sense of the word. I mean that he is not satisfied, like the Japanese, for instance, or the Polynesian, or the Egyptian, or the Greek of Pompeii, or even the Greek of Byzantium, to ornament the walls of public buildings or private dwellings with symbolic motifs borrowed from creation or from the prevailing myth.

Nor is he content to surround the spirit with an atmosphere agreeable, or pious, or cruel, in any case obeying a ritual, or customary preoccupation, or to consecrate a unanimous social or religious order. It is the spectacle of his soul, and of that alone, which he imposes on the spectator, without seeking to please him, or convince him, or obey him. He reveals to the crowd, by means of the image that haunts him, the permanent drama that moves him to the depths. Until he lets the profusion of the ornamentation ruin his architecture through its search for effect, he has evidently the passion for naked surfaces, brutal as axes, dominated by aggressive towers, pierced by those naked, regular openings, separated by straight columns, all things that give his palaces an appearance of such wild grace in spite of their sadness and air of fury.[2] And it groups these palaces, although they are rivals of one another, around public squares whose arrangement as a whole marks an irresistible sense of formal harmony and decoration.

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[1] Figs. 77, 78.

[2] Fig. 79.

The music of Monteverde, Corelli, Marcello unfolds with a unilateral passion, sonorous as brass, with hard, sinuous volumes, which one sees rather than hears. In the literature of Italy, one finds this obstinate care for plastic and decorative expression that makes it cover with frescoes not only the chapels of the churches and the walls of the cemeteries, but the façades of the houses; Dante's poem, D'Annunzio's novels are a succession of images that leave the strange impression of works of art made to appear in space and not to unfold in time.

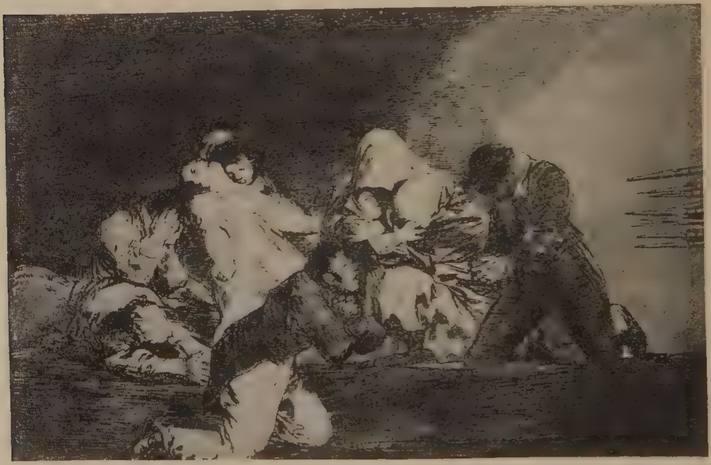

Fig. 80
Tragedy (Goya)

The Spaniards are almost at the opposite extreme from this spirit that projects the most complicated drama into the image and the setting, since on the contrary their theater restores this drama to the oppositions of sentiment which are, moreover, easily transposable into the image and the setting. Their dramatic instinct appears, at first glance, not only in the eternal antithesis that makes their greatest book one of the three or four great books of humanity, but also in the gold that shines out of the shadows from the naves of their cathedrals. It appears in their Christs of painted wood, torn, bleeding, stained by their sores, opposing spiritual grandeur of sacrifice to the most ignoble matter; it appears in the unforeseen contrasts of the most tragic painting that has expressed the Occident.[1]

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[1] Fig. 80.

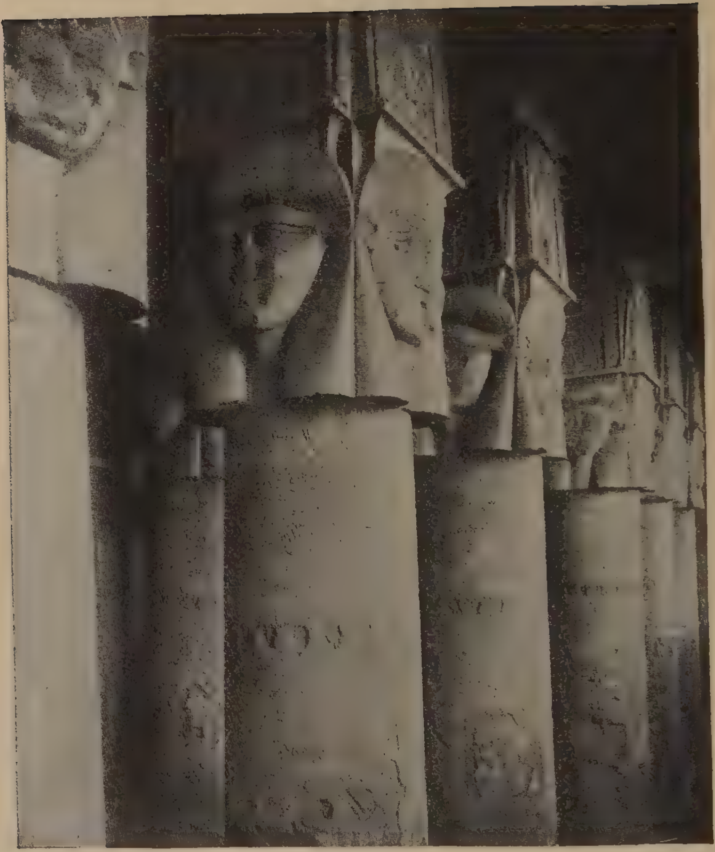

Fig. 80a

The Column (Egypt)

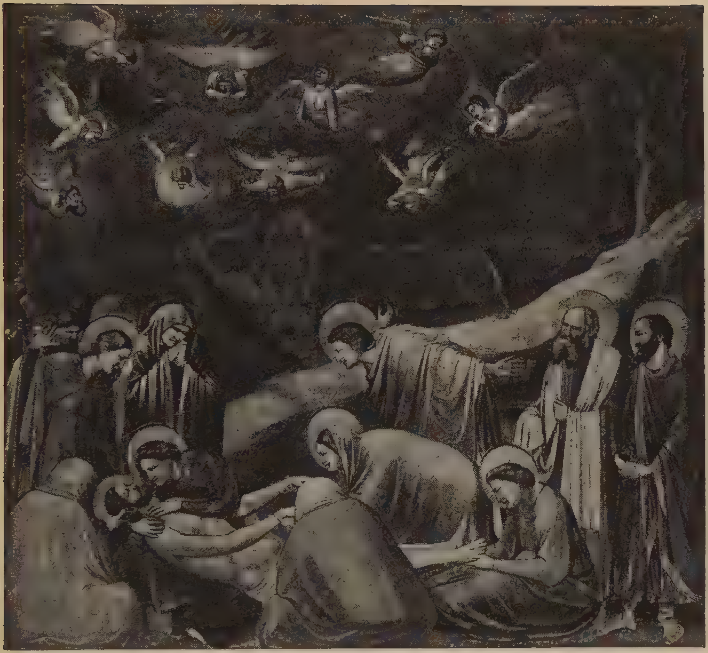

Fig. 81

The Melodic Arabesque (Giotto)

Chapter III. THE ACROBAT, IMAGE OF GOD

I

NEVERTHELESS, when the spirit of some illustrious work has vividly touched us, we discover one day or another a contrast between it and its origins that sometimes reaches the point of a radical antagonism. For the artist in whom sounds the most emphatic accent of his epoch, for him who is distinguished and who will endure, expression is like a cord stretched between the two extremities of an arc.

One of these extremities is unquestionably the action of the social and historical milieu. The other, the reaction of a heart. Between the two there is established a system of equilibrium suspended between the errors or the sentimental excesses that characterize the epoch and the secret protest they awaken in this heart. We cannot understand the fundamentals of any capital work if we ignore this. We shall slide over the surfaces; we shall forever fail to appreciate its heights and its roots. The work of art is a drama, and all the more poignant because of the grandiose serenity which characterizes it from the outset. It indicates, without establishing them, the spiritual limits of the desire to live according to the dominant instincts of the surrounding crowd, limits that condition both self-expression and self-restraint. To depict life is nothing if this chaotic, indistinct, diffuse life which constitutes the adventure of almost all men on this earth is not upheld and corrected by a strong inner structure that manifests both the consent and the intervention of the spirit.

How shall we understand the order and the calm that prevail in a group or a statue of Phidias if, after having shown that this order and this calm can be found in the form of the hills, the gulfs, the immense luminous space, we then observe the turbulence, the lack of discipline, the impulsive violence, the sudden changes of humor and conduct of the Greek race in general and the people of Athens in particular? How shall we understand the moral energy, the prophetic power, the grandeur, however convulsive, of the style of Michael Angelo if, after having recognized the fury of the passions that mark the Italian race, we then observe the universal baseness of character of that time, the complete dismemberment of the religious edifice, the political corruption of the towns, the low estate of morals? How shall we understand the silent drama

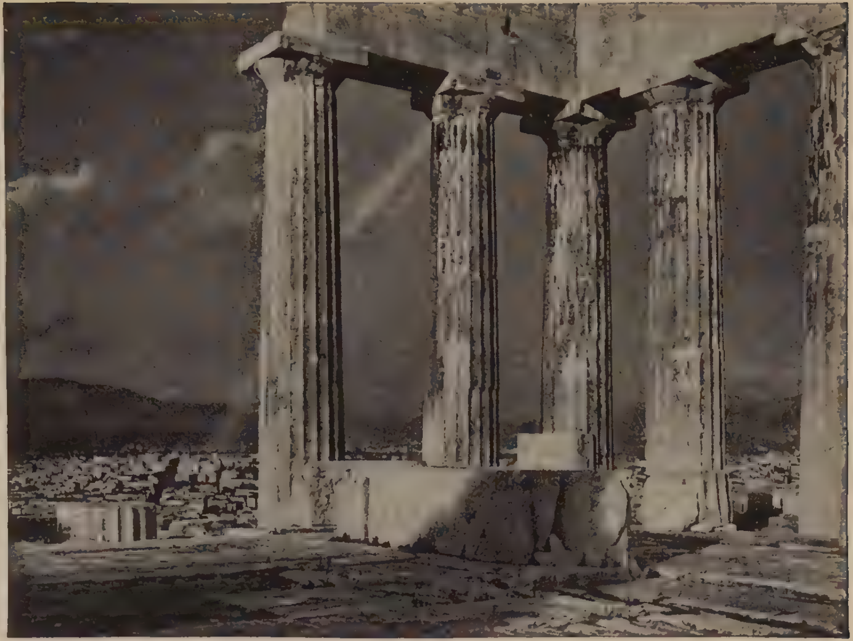

Fig. 82

Lyrical Order (The Parthenon)

revealed by the slightest sketch of Rembrandt, his smallest etching, his most indistinct outline, by any of his portraits whatever if we forget the war of the beggars, the gibbets and stakes, the pillories at the crossroads, the sores of the Amsterdam slums, the strange play of light at the back of the hovels and the skies hung with shining mist if, instead, we see only the coarse Dutch life, its healthy out-of-door existence, the cleanliness and prosperity of the houses, streets and fields, the joy and verve of the crowds, the ingenuous feasting and the indisputable morality that maintain all this? It is useless to go farther. The costume alone identifies Phidias, Michael Angelo, Rembrandt as a burgher of Athens, Rome, or Amsterdam. The soul escapes from the milieu which it draws with it and uplifts as if it wished to condense and separate its crystal essence. Everywhere and at all times, between the ordinary history of a people and the evidences which it leaves, there exists the identity of substance and the difference of density which one observes between dust and granite.

The greatest works of art resemble a vengeance of the spirit and the heart that have been martyred by universal custom and seem a complete paradox to the eyes of the crowd. I know quite well that this paradoxical air gradually disappears as one grows accustomed to it, but it reappears vividly as soon as one begins to explore the times that gave birth to great works and to plumb the passions, the customs, and the laws that apparently support them. And it is the more accentuated the more individualized the epoch is, the more religion is debated, the less morality and law are respected and followed, and when the man of ability stands erect, facing a crowd that is at once anarchic and silly, in order to affirm against it the persistence of the spirit. The individual can only define himself by adopting the same scale as others, by placing himself under the same standard as others, by constantly comparing his ideas and his actions with those of others.

Democracies, for example, authorize and even impose comparisons. It is therefore natural that even a superficial examination should almost always reveal, where democracies prevail, a sharp antagonism between the environment and the artist. But in the most coherent, the most hierarchized, even the most hieratic epoch, if one will take the trouble to study the inner meaning of the great collective works in which the crowd itself, following a universal rhythm, expresses its highest tendencies according to its most living methods, one discovers a veiled contrast, veiled by the crowd, with its passions and its customs. At whatever moment one isolates it in its flow, all life is at bottom a vast æsthetic system which maintains a precarious equilibrium between its divergent tendencies. The task of the spirit is to discover and make plain this system. Because the work of art has no other function than to establish this equilibrium, it constitutes its most moving, if not its most perfect image, and it alone has been as useful to man as bread.

It is not plastic expression alone that at one bound can thus reach our spiritual pole and turn our animal pole in its direction. The acrobat marvelously symbolizes the position of man confronted with the problem of giving order to the universe. He overcomes the weight that drags him down, and the weight itself acquires, by a sublime paradox, the ease, the lightness, the freedom of his movements. One will understand art and history at once if one never loses sight of the acrobat.

The whole of Greek art, for instance, displays this invincible tendency that drives profound souls to create in themselves a style that seems the shining antithesis of the average appearance of customs so as to express it later in the dance, the temple, the statue, the ode, social and military action, and tragedy. There is no need to describe the sanguinary versatility, the fantastic and futile spirit, the moral and political anarchy which, for six or seven centuries, characterized the adventure of the Athenians. There was constant disorder, there were continual changes of constitutions and methods, there was endemic war that was cruel and sadistic as well, every city ten times destroyed and raising itself ten times more truculent than before, every strong man experiencing repeatedly in his career apotheosis and exile. There was a violent and universal impulse towards responsibilities too high and ends too inaccessible that ended in the execution of the leaders who had taken up and defended them and the philosophers who had been drawn into them. There was no

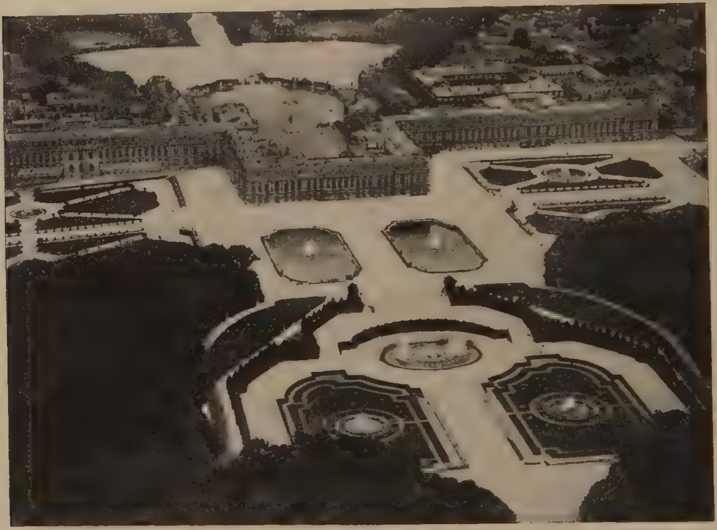

Fig. 83

Lyrical Order (Versailles)

security in the relations between men all of whom were in pursuit of gain, no security in the relations between cities all of which sought to live at one another's expense. There was an atrocious spirit of domination dissembled under idealistic pretexts, otherwise sincere, that included the justification of destruction, felony and carnage. . . .

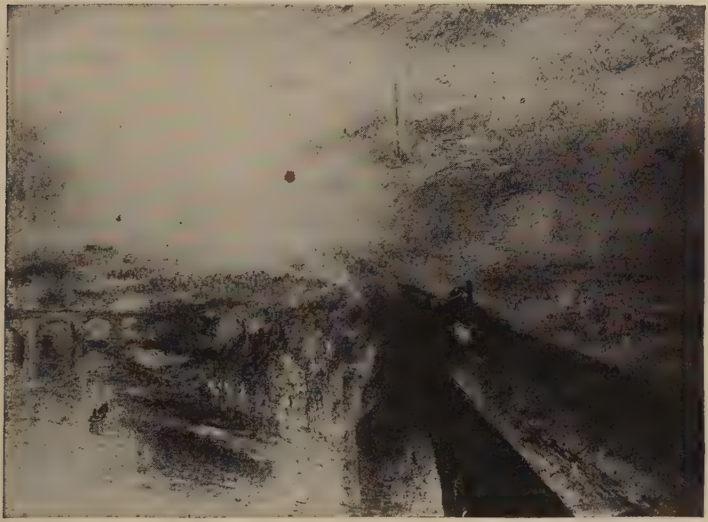

FIG. 84

LYRICAL DISORDER (Turner)

Opposed to this there was such order in the arrangement of the elements of a tragedy or of the temple, a harmony so imperious and simple in their proportions, a rhythm so constantly and so strictly subjected to the control of the most limpid reason and to its most logical deductions that for centuries the temple and the tragedy represented to us, through a sort of falsehood, the whole Greek civilization as the continuous and complete mastery of the spirit over the passions.[1] In reality, it was the spiritual residue of this civilization which, establishing itself as a conqueror over the ruins it had made, brought it forward as one of the determining elements of the future, in spite of its inner lacerations and antagonistic violences. In this case the illusion has finally vanquished the truth, as always happens whenever a race—however base, quarrelsome, and unjust it may be—bears in its heart an image capable of surviving all storms, crossing all seas, and abolishing distances. Plastic and philosophic harmony has cloaked the horror of the abyss, like those corollas that cover the surface of poisonous swamps in which their roots are buried.

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[1] Figs. 1, 82.

France offers an almost analogous contrast, from its position of almost geometrical precision, at the other extremity of the spiritual axis that starts from the banks of the Ægean Sea and traverses Rome and Florence to end in the tragedies, gardens, and palaces of the classic century. Over an almost waste land between the Zuyder Zee and Versailles and the Cévennes, there still prevailed a military and social orgy, license of manners, the repellent grossness of a gorged aristocracy, as well as the merciless wars, tortures, and massacres that had marked the conflict of the religious orders of the preceding age. All these powers were confusedly jumbled together and confounded under the autocracy at the very time when there arose Cartesianism, the three unities, the Alexandrine, the trimmed trees, the formal fountains, the bridges, roads, colonnades, and high walls, a whole spiritual construction that extended to all the regions of the intelligence and masked the disorder of appetites under its cadenced and regular appearance. In addition, and especially, an almost divine moderation, a feeling for the proportions of things and of the universal and constant relativity of phenomena, introduced through reason an indispensable counterweight to the deep-seated nobility of sentiment.[1]

The stability of art was here an immediate result of the instability of opinions, and the æsthetic discipline was invented by the most undisciplined of all the peoples then living. For it was necessary to reduce to a common scale the excessive impulses that characterized this people and so often cut it into two diametrically opposed camps. It was necessary incessantly to repulse or bring into accord the mutually exclusive influences with which the surrounding peoples penetrated this flat land living at their crossroads. Romanticism, they tell us, escapes this singular function of acting as a stabilizer. But it only seems to do so, because, coming in from outside, from England and Germany, it spread and developed at a time when the abstract order that sprang from the Revolution and was introduced by Napoleon into law, was assuring the positive reign of the French bourgeoisie against which, precisely, its lyric tumult unceasingly reacted.[2] Thus, from one end to the other of the French spiritual epopee, the phenomenon is constant. These variations, these successive and extreme experiments, these sudden changes of front belong even more to the Celts than to the Hellenes in whom the spirit, equally mobile, is more impure, less disinterested, and in whom a more strained and calculated moderation appears as eurythmy, or order. But the contrast is of the same nature and assumes very similar aspects.

Let no one object that in the epochs when France prepared and realized its classic order amid public disturbances, English manners presented a still more brutal character, without however imposing upon English art, as a counterbalance, an equally well-ordered aspect. Here, in spite of everything—in spite of the axe that fell, in dungeons, upon the necks of young women—or perhaps thanks to the axe—here a spirit of continuity prevailed, in the political organism, a spirit that was altogether unknown in France. Once the moral discipline brought in by the Reformation had been imposed on the passions to maintain a social equilibrium in which the aristocratic caste and the commercial caste henceforth played a rôle unanimously agreed upon, the political convulsions gradually slackened and permitted the English to pursue obstinately the conquest of the freedom of parliaments and the seas. For three centuries in France the country was exhausted with political and religious struggles. Idealistic apriorism always got the better of economic realism. And finally the lack of moderation appeared in the absolute abstractions of equality and fraternity, while, on the other side of the channel, the positive idea of liberty limited by the neighboring liberties absorbed and reunited the effort of all. In opposition to what took place in France, the order in England was practical and the disorder intellectual. And in contrast with this practical order which was confined on all sides by the Puritan matrix, and augmented, perhaps, by domestic well-being and egotism, English lyricism suddenly flowed out from these cramped souls. Its moving waves mirror the starlight. It listens to the murmur of the winds, follows the fall and the flight of the leaves, seeks the enchanted palaces in the architecture of the clouds, draws from men's hearts the grandiose disorder of Shakespeare, Byron, Shelley, and Turner,[1] fantasies of fantastic fogs and, through its informal gardens, establishes in the sinister order of the towns, the mystery of the lakes, the shadow of the nocturnal woods in which the nightingale sobs and that wild countryside appears, haunted, under the moon, by sorcerers and enchanters.

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[1] Fig. 83.

[2] Figs. 2, 157, 163.

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[1] Fig. 84

If a methodical system appears, in Greece in the ancient world and in France in the modern world, in the two peoples upon whom their lack of method imposes the most despotic need, it seems that the intoxicated expansion of the lyrical and pantheistic sentiment of the world has protested, through the voice of the English race, against its universal mercantilism and its practical religion, whose inner springs are constantly bent on the repression of instinct. We observe in Germany a phenomenon of the same order. When the obedience of the multitudes to the law and to rule assumes there an almost mechanical aspect, makes one

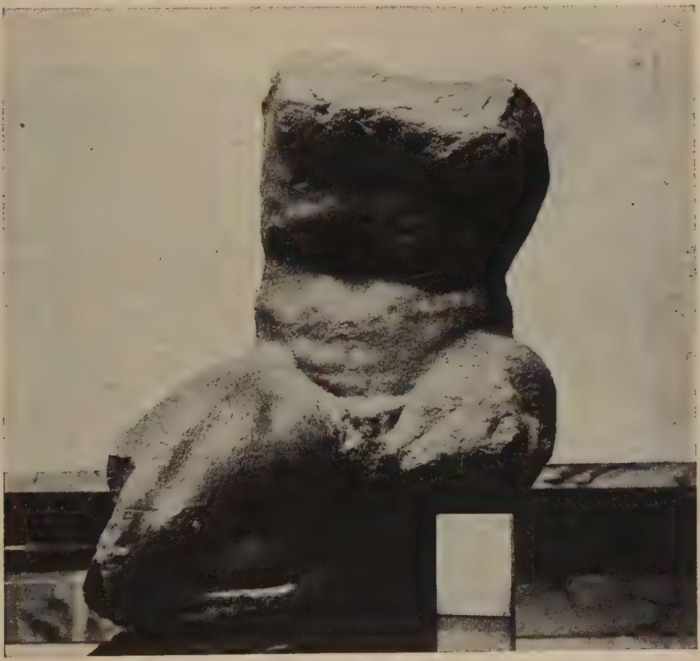

Fig. 85

Anatomical Idealism (The Parthenon)

uniform block from which nothing diverges, in which all efforts turn in a unilateral sense, a man suddenly looks within himself and closing his eyes refuses to notice the teachings of experience and the object, takes no account of the hundred thousand facts of the library and the laboratory that autocratically rule the militarized savant and give to the great musical expansion the intransigent form of his will alone.

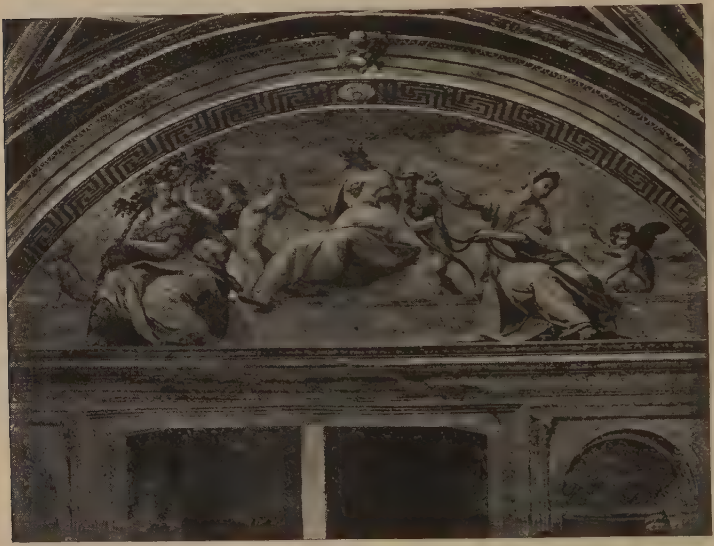

Fig. 86
The Harmonic Arabesque (Raphael)

II

Does this mean that the great man, always, everywhere, in all circumstances, affirms himself only by placing himself in diametrical opposition to the spirit of the people whose flower he is? By no means. First of all, he speaks its language. Embedded like it in a geographical and historical milieu from which he cannot tear himself without condemning his original gifts to green-sickness and early death, he expresses, through radiant words, its obscure desires for continuity through action. He is one of the voices of the multitude and like it he experiences, through his passion and his need to satisfy them, the imperious need to organize them so that he may discover and understand the principle that will sublimate them and give a heroic unity to their disorder. I have read in the words of a Spanish writer[1] that the realism of his race is only "the wholesome reaction of a people against its own tendency to dissemble the unpleasant aspects of its life." And this is quite true. For if the beggar drapes himself in his tattered cape as in a royal mantle, Velasquez, who resembles him, has depicted this cape without forgetting a single gap in it. No doubt Don Quixote leaves his niece and his friends to purify the world, but his horse is a jade

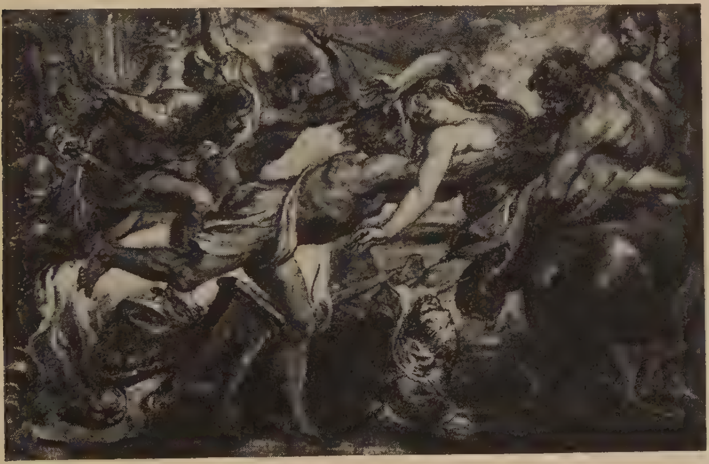

FIG. 87

THE SYMPHONIC ARABESQUE (Rubens)

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[1] M. de Madariaga.

and the sublime knight wears an armor of pasteboard and a shaving-dish on his head.

These powerful contrasts, which emphasize the profound desire of the race, are carried at a stroke into the domain of plastic art by Velasquez, Zurbaran, and Goya, who throw over the frightful aridity of the earth the aerial veil of wandering harmonies that give the Spanish atmosphere through the dust and twilight the quality of jewels—silver, pearl, and trembling dew. Thus their world is not concealed but transfigured.[1] Do we not see the same thing among the Greeks, who never go beyond their prodigious faculty of ennobling and idealizing the exclusively physical form which is the indelible mark, of their narrow realism in the domain of practical life and material interest? The same thing among the French, whose moderation in rhythm, while concealing their lack of moderation in opinions, betrays their incapacity for great lyrical flights? And among the English, whose most liberal spirits—Swift, Hogarth, DeFoe, Byron, Stevenson, Bernard Shaw, sometimes Shakespeare himself—even while the grandiose disorder of the poem is reacting against the powerful order of practical and domestic life, are obsessed by the principle of morality? Among the Germans whose forcible escape through music from the monotony of obedience and the heavy materialism of manners, leads, in the world of sound, to an absolute obedience to the commands of the most independent of arts and constrains the least material means of expression to give the Dionysiac forces—the hunger for food, war, and sex—their most formidable support?

The Italians present a still more impressive spectacle. They invented the arabesque in painting whose spiritual significance is the most profound possible. The Greeks had hardly suspected it. We might even wonder if the form of their pediment did not give us merely an illusion that they knew its secret virtue were it not for the Combat of Olympia,[1] whose sculptor has obeyed the dominant care for continuity in action, revealed through continuity in deed, in which the great Italians would have recognized their own dominant preoccupation. Nevertheless, this is only an isolated work. Even as individuals, the Greeks made use of the temple and the myth in order to unite them. With the Italians, on the contrary, from the fourteenth century onward, the myth is attacked, the temple shaken on its mystical bases, gods foreign to Catholicism appear from all sides, the individual flings himself passionately and confusedly into the search for his own reality. The most complete passional anarchy arrays man against man. Street warfare is endemic. The amorous frenzy breaks and scatters families. The frenzy for lucre, the frenzy of political ambition divides cities and drenches them in blood. Poison and the dagger are the natural and have become, so to speak, the legitimate weapons of the wild passion that devastates the heart of the individual.

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[1] Figs. 33. 185. 186

Now even today when one enters an Italian church, one is struck by the disorder that reigns there, if one chooses to compare it with the North. The crowd there is scattered at random, talking in groups, often with their backs to the altar, men and women confused, lovers, laughers, the curious, children, even tradesmen, mystics with their foreheads on the flagstones, all mingled together and each for himself. Splendid, and also fatal scattering of wills, pleasures, and sufferings! To bring order into this crowd a long sinuous line must unite this upright child, whom a kneeling woman folds in her arms, with this man who supports himself against a pillar in order not to fall from anguish, this couple isolated in their passion, cheek to cheek, this old woman with the eagle's face looking fixedly at God.

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[1] Fig. 2.

Only a line such as that of the arabesque can impose a common law on these scattered beings each of whom, all his life, vainly seeks his own law. There is no question here of the cinematic eurythmy of Athens in which the disorder is much more in people's hearts than in their heads. There is no question of the static moderation of France whose errors hold more of intellectual fantasy than of sentimental imagination. It is a question of establishing between the antagonistic passions, expressed by these forms, without apparent cohesion, a dynamic equilibrium which the suppleness, the confusion, and the variability of the lines can, at every instant, break, reform, assemble in new combinations—to break again the next moment. The arabesque, which Raphael carries to its most perfect degree of continuity and of modulating and enveloping expressiveness, is the weapon invented by the mind to unite these scattered forms separated gradually through the disaggregation of Catholicism during the last two or three hundred years, and to carry them simultaneously to the conquest of a spiritual unity which, having been destroyed in the human heart by knowledge, was awakened by the same agency in man's brain. It is, so to speak, a moving articulation. The Venetians, while awaiting Rubens,[1] will finish his task by making the earth, the sky, the waters, and all the reflections wandering between earth and sky and water, the universal accomplices of this communion which will serve as a counterbalance, in the æsthetic domain, to the frantic individualism of the social domain. Who can fail to see that, here also, this contrast only emphasizes the dependence of the great Italian upon the most elementary instincts of his race, by obliging him to

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[1] Fig. 87.

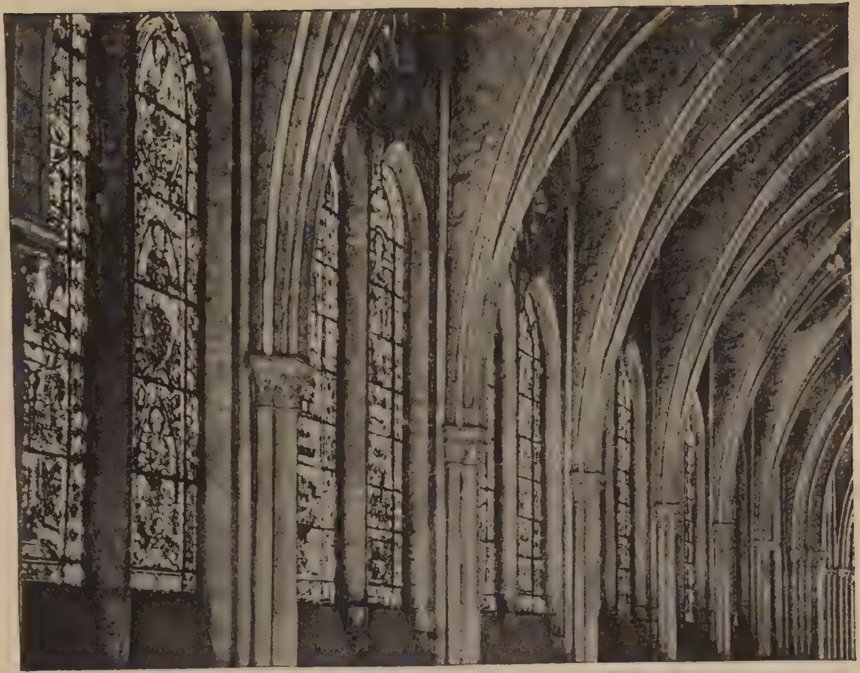

Fig. 88

The Bone Structure of the Guilds (Chartres) establish, through his will-to-order, a unity that persists while refusing him its heart?

III

The arabesque—at least the arabesque that includes real and concrete forms in its continuous rhythmical modulations—is so completely the necessary expression of the Italian soul that at the height of the Middle Ages, from the end of the thirteenth century onward, it already inscribes itself in the church frescoes with a firmness that excludes neither candor, nor love, nor the tender exaltation that at first characterizes them. At this moment, however, there is still a profound and general communion of souls in Catholicism at its height, in this Italy where Dante is writing his poem, where Thomas Aquinas has just disappeared, where the influence of Francis of Assisi is only beginning to be discerned in people's hearts. The day when Giotto painted his "Descent from the Cross,"[1] the Christian moral unity was destroyed by a Christian and the spirit of continuity was transformed from mysticism to knowledge. This in turn acted as a restraint upon that individualism from which the world nevertheless was to obtain its ferment. At this instant, in a certain man in a certain work, in which the great sinuous line of enthusiasm and knowledge causes the soul of the dead god to pass into the kneeling women who hold his broken limbs, we can grasp the precise point where the past, centered in a common faith, and the future scattered in the search for facts, face each other unseeingly, I think, in the candid intelligence of a hero. From the day when he began to follow the progress and the detours of his linear consciousness over its blood-stained roads through the present passions and sorrows which the human form symbolizes, always present also and living, the arabesque becomes the most powerful lever of the plastic organization of the Occidental spirit.

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[1] Fig. 81.

Three centuries later, on a terrain plowed by Raphael and seeded by Venice, we shall witness an encounter between the North and the South that will be decisive for the Occident. The giant Rubens[1] will succeed in crowding a prodigious mass of matter and living forge into the melodic line that orients the very spirit of the passions. There is another contrast here between the grossness of the instincts of the Germanic world animated by a diffused pantheism and the trenchant clearness of the Latin intelligence which, abandoned to itself, would ignore this living flood but alone can provide the means of uplifting it.

Suppose we turn to Giotto in order to follow the development of the aristocratic line which, beginning with him, penetrates the North in proportion as individualistic fragmentation dissolves the religious unity of the Middle Ages in the democracies about to be born. The first thing that strikes us is the progressive organization of a unity of the intellectual consciousness that is destined to replace it. Here is a contrast no longer Italian but already European between an élite that is incessantly dispersed and an amorphous mass that tends to dissolve, since mysticism confesses itself powerless to bind it together. Nowhere, in the Occidental Middle Ages, save precisely when Giotto appears to close these Middle Ages, and at the same moment inaugurate the personal quest, nowhere does one find this powerful fashion of at once uniting and exalting people's minds. No such thing was needed since the faith and the formal symbols of the faith sufficed for this task.

Art then, in Europe as in Asia, possesses a character of enthusiastic universality which causes it to spring from men's hearts almost without touching their intelligence. It seems at first as if there were no intermediate agent between the formidable unity of the popular passion and the impulsion art receives from it. In order to find a contrast between these diffused poems and the voices of the multitude that ascend together and answer one another in a common sentiment, we must first observe that this contrast occurs repressed, as if determined to keep silent so as not to hinder the eruption of the general energy which it is of prime importance to effect. It is the contrary of what takes place when the individual has the floor and when it is very difficult to grasp an accord that nevertheless always exists on some point between the desire of his race and the revolutionary interpretations which he pretends to give it.

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[1] Fig. 87.

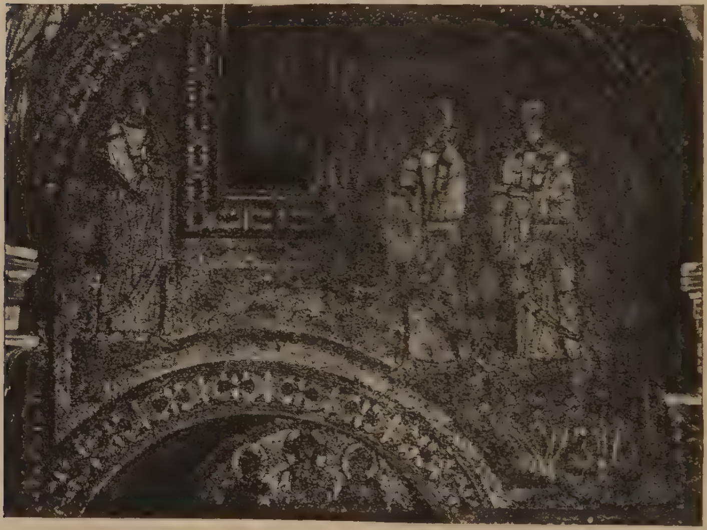

Fig. 89

The Mystic Refuge (Rome, Mosaic)

Here, then, we have the choir of the people. Listen to it. The cathedral lifts with it, as it soars, all the hopes, struggles, and sufferings of men, all their joys mingled with the sounds of trades, the sounds of the fields, the sounds of the streets scattered by the thousand forms of the markets, the kitchen-gardens, the rivers, the woods, from the top to the bottom of the edifice which is shaken by the sound of bells and traversed by the light of the stained-glass windows, in a world of painted statues, sculptured capitals, and garlands of leaves, vegetables, and fruits.

The contrast, though no doubt less evident, is just as powerful as it was two centuries earlier, when the thick-set Roman temple, almost naked, huddled on its short limbs, placed like a dyke at the center of the frightful convulsions of war, amid the bloody instability of temporal powers, the theocratic framework of its continuous vaults which its massive walls united immovably with the earth. Since the cathedral is free and animated like a merry crowd, since the long slender fingers of its pillars lift it lightly above the pavement, the corporative bony structure[1] is as clearly defined in its skeleton as are the universal beliefs which it balances and cadences on every side. Through its buttresses, pillars, and ribs, it maintains their formidable pantheism within the rigorous limits of the most steadfast reason.

At the other extremity of the Christian world the spectacle, though no doubt less touching, is quite as impressive. The Byzantine statues that open their fathomless eyes on the inner enigma, the Greek temple that spreads its exterior to the light, but turns its architectonic force toward the interior of the structure, the marvelous mosaics evoking the freshness of seas, the variegation of meadows, the glitter of the stars, are only a mystical refuge against the sexual orgy and the brutality of the punishments through which the Christianized Hellenic autocracy marked its horrible power.[1] As for the endless arabesques and geometrical combination of Islam, which still cover the walls of palaces that rise beside clear and shadowy waters, they know that nothing durable can unite tribes shaped by the empty desert, separated by solitudes, unceasingly devastated by fierce appetites. They assume from this a value resolutely and exclusively abstract[2] and seek their spiritual continuity in silence and immobility.

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[1] Fig. 88.

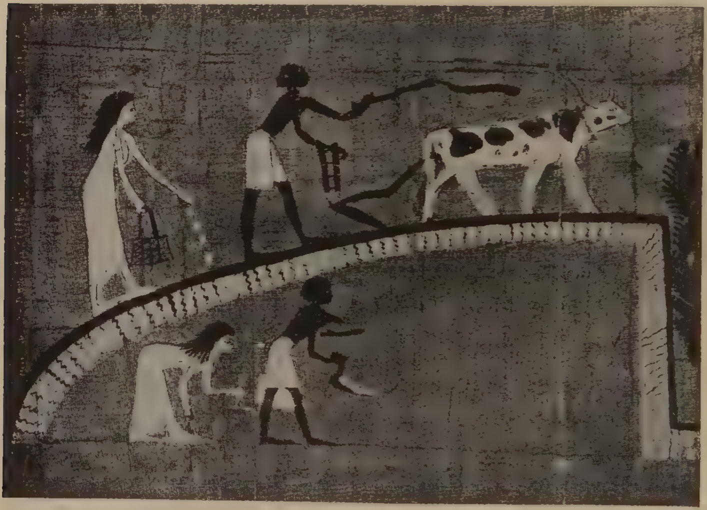

Fig. 90
The Work of the Fields (Egypt)

It is necessary, in this connection, to point out immediately that at these great epochs when art shows this confused unity and this universality which bear the stamp of mysticism and give it such power, a strong hierarchic element is always present in the social body, supporting and usually oppressing it. It is this which checks, in the temple and the statue, through the intervention of the temporal and religious or sometimes—as in France—corporative authority, the outburst of popular energy and faith. On the contrary, following the fourth century in Greece, the Renaissance, the Reformation, or the Revolution, those very strongly individualized epochs in which the theocratic or feudal authority is hardly more than a façade, it is the great individual who is the only aristocrat, charged by the obscure instinct of the species to curb and purify its passions. This explains the system of equilibrium, silent but so firm and strong, which is necessarily conditioned by the Occidental cathedral, the Byzantine church and the mosque, the three orders issuing from Semitic spiritualism. But whenever one goes outside of Europe, in antiquity or in the Orient, wherever a powerful autocracy, aristocracy, or theocracy prevails—in Egypt, in Mexico, in China, in India—one observes a spectacle almost identical with this.

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[1] Figs. 89, 172, 204.
[2] Figs. 75, 114.

Egypt, physical and moral, seems at first exclusively defined by pure colossi affirming, in their rectilinear universe, the metaphysical despotism and the social consequences of the religion of the land. Nevertheless, the pitiless rigidity of the profiles and the heavier accumulation of granitic masses and walls do not succeed in stifling the charm and freshness of the popular realism—young women shaking down blossoms or picking them, the sound of wings in the wheat, the sound of the wind in the palms.[1] Rather they give this realism its striking character, incorporating it alive in the most sustained style possible.

China does not belie the immemorial patience of its cultivators, its slow meditation accumulating like a rich pasture, in progressively heaped-up masses, the heavy monsters that border the avenues of its tombs. But its sages are present there through their meticulous elegance of thought, which maintains their formidable profiles in a morality that is hermetic, circular, subtle, singing, dense as a vase of bronze, unctuous as a jade jewel. The suave serenity of Buddhist art in Java, in Cambodia, the peaceful light that it radiates, will never

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[1] Fig. 90.

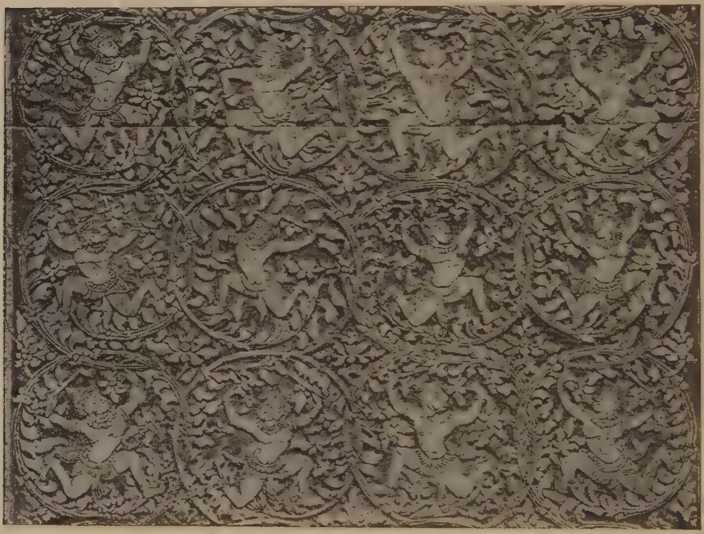

Fig. 91

The Orgy of Happiness (Khmer)

prevent an orgy of dancing and flowers from flooding these countries constantly with an intoxication that at the same time stupefies and lulls them, but disintegrates them.[1] The bleeding Aztec statues,[2] those amputated fragments, those composite monsters made up of bloody mouths, decayed hands, tusks, and claws, only accentuate the expression of anxious expectation

[1] Fig. 91.

[2] Fig. 55.

of the god Tlaloc, who longs for the rain like a poor man whose field has been burned to lime by the sun. It is easy to discover in negro or Polynesian art an extreme contrast between the ingenuous and disordered violence of the appetites of those races and the schematic simplicity of their intellectual organization.[1]

And as for India, if anything is as permanent in its immutability as is the art of the Indians in its eternal flow, it is indeed their system of castes the implacable frontiers of which can never be crossed. But the metaphysics of Brahmanism, while determining them for all time, delivers to him who sculptures the caverns and the mountains the liberating doctrine of transmigration: and as every form, however fixed it may be, can thus pass into another, this contrast—perhaps the sharpest possible—is not evident.[2]

IV

Let us go further and conclude. The artist appears to us as the conscience of peoples, charged by them to react against both the disorders and the excesses of their instincts, and to find in these very excesses and disorders the sign of their most constant and their most real desires. In short, he organizes them, which he could not do if he did not first accept them. And through the footprint which he leaves upon the soil where his race has lived, suffered, worked, he remains its principal and most irrefutable herald. But let us give a more generalizing look at these temples, these statues, all these serried rows of objects which the artist leaves as landmarks along the desert routes to show the men who are coming that others have passed that way. When, after having studied their grain, their density, their form, we seek to evoke the customs, ideas, and faces of those who built them, they lead us to the larger and more profound sympathy of history.

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[1] Figs. 47, 49, 198.

[2] Figs. 39, 131, 132, 177, 202, 207, 216.

Even when plunged into drama and war, history calls them into being, as a man who lifts his plow with his bleeding hands. A great people leaves a work of art after it, and just this is its history. A civilization, however undistinguished it may be and whatever may be the horrors and the sufferings that have overthrown it, is in its ensemble a poem which the temple, the statue or the symphony epitomizes. This is what makes them so moving, so decisive, so necessary for us. This tragic equilibrium everywhere conditions or constitutes the work of art, and if we examine it and seek to find in it the echoes of the vast social poem which it has survived, we find that at bottom the equilibrium is the very law of this poem, which would not exist without it. It establishes itself from one end to the other of the spiritual life of the ruling people, no matter how tormented, devastated, full of shame and blood this life may be, and gives to its adventure an heroic form that endures into the future.

Madame de Staël has said: "The Germans, who cannot endure the yoke of rules in literature, would like to have their entire line of conduct marked out for them in advance." If the illustrious blue-stocking had mentioned music as well as literature, would this not sum up the whole story of the Germans? Indeed, if we look keenly, would this not give the whole course of history? All history in which the art of war and armies has been conceived in order to stylize and canalize violence, revolutions created to give play to the rigidity of political forms, laws devised to restrain the convulsive disorders of the instinctive expansion of man by an unremitting attack upon this expansion,[1] religion formed to raise over the mire of the heart some air-tight reliquary to hold a nosegay of the flowers that cluster there so thickly that they render the atmosphere unbreathable, even to themselves, and all the forms of marriage imagined to stifle the voice of love under cares or comforts.

The prophet-character of the Jews, for example, from which moral Europe has sprung almost entirely, was an iron brake destined to arrest in their descent the dissolving critical spirit and the sordid immorality of almost the whole race, at the risk of destroying that race. There was need to castrate the Semitic goat, to break the teeth of the usurious hyena so that it should release a few shreds of lean meat. Besides, this was a roving people, without a material home-land. All the more need, then, that they should build themselves a moral home-land, enclosed by thick walls, whence they could throw boiling oil and molten lead on the heads of the besiegers. And this land was full of individuals, all furiously analyzing, dissecting, and destroying themselves. Therefore they required a unique god and they fought to display his terrifying face to the world and to themselves. The formidable strength of the language cut, like an axe, the gangrenous bone or, at need, the neck supporting the listless head that faltered from tenderness or skepticism. Thus while elsewhere races accepted without a murmur the armatures of a law designed to lend them moral support, here the great individual attempted to toughen and to salt down the spiritual backbone of man himself, so that it might take the place of legal armature.

At all times the great man is merely a pitiless regulator of the passions, whether in the social, military, judicial, or political field. The passions of the multitude, of course, to which he gives the grandiose form of his own passions that he has brought to the light and examined until he can discern their contours, mass, impulsion, and creative weight. The great man introduces an æsthetic state of the intelligence into the world by means of the law which he dictates, of religion which he animates, of the success which he assures, of the statue which he sculptures, or the drama which he writes. He evades now the environing order, now the environing disorder, here, by establishing a new order in his heart, there, by forcing his heart to correct the disorder. Thus all history records the antithetical struggle of the individual against the social body that tends to absorb him or which he tends to destroy, their alternating victories and the provisional equilibrium that each maintains for an hour by absorbing the powers of the other.

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[1] The *written* Law appeared in those Southern countries where instincts are freer, customs less rigid, impulses less repressed, and good faith rarer

This ceaseless balancing dominates epochs and even races. It extends to the longest periods of history, those of which neither the origin nor the end are visible. The great immemorial rhythms that inspire our metaphysics are unintelligible to those who take no account of its always present and perceptible reality in all the incarnations and excursions of the spirit. Thus we observe that Oriental philosophies attest the perpetual flux of things while Oriental races remain fixed. And that while Occidental philosophies strive to establish stability in customs and manners, the peoples of the Occident know no rest from one end of life to the other.

Only in this way can we explain the conquest of plastic art by the religions that spring from pure mind and the conquest of pure mind by the material arts. Hence the extreme contrasts and surprising antitheses between, on one hand, too rigid moral disciplines together with a sensual ferment which, far from destroying them, stamps them with an immense humanity, and on the other hand between very free or even altogether ignoble customs and an æsthetic armature so strong that it wins for these customs the consent of the loftiest reason. It is impossible to explain the art of the South, the art of the North, or even their politics if we lose sight of the origins of the ceaseless struggle between the strong modeling expressive of sentiment which reveals the Northern, Christian, and Romantic character, and the architectural, intellectual character of the planes which define what is Classic, Pagan and Southern.[1] In one case, the individual tries to separate himself from the herd through the opposition of lights and shadows, unexpected movements that push surfaces outward, a breathless lyrical expansion, and in

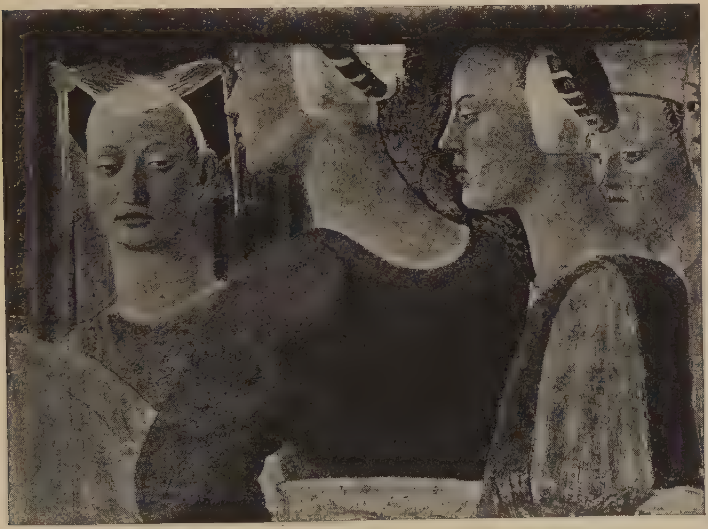

Fig. 92

The Plane—Southern Intellect (Piero della Francesca) the other case he attempts through distinct profiles, regular cadences, a severe and logical organization of the sentiments, to give the bewildered sheep a common direction. Though the man of the South is the helpless prey of his passions, which separate man from man and arouse rending conflicts in himself by separating the mind from the heart and the heart from sex, as soon as he approaches an æsthetic object or idea he tends to generalize, to idealize, to unite. The man of the North, who generalizes about morality because he tends unceasingly to place mind, heart, and sex in accord, never approaches an idea or an object save with an invincible desire for analysis and characterization.

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[1] Figs. 92, 93.

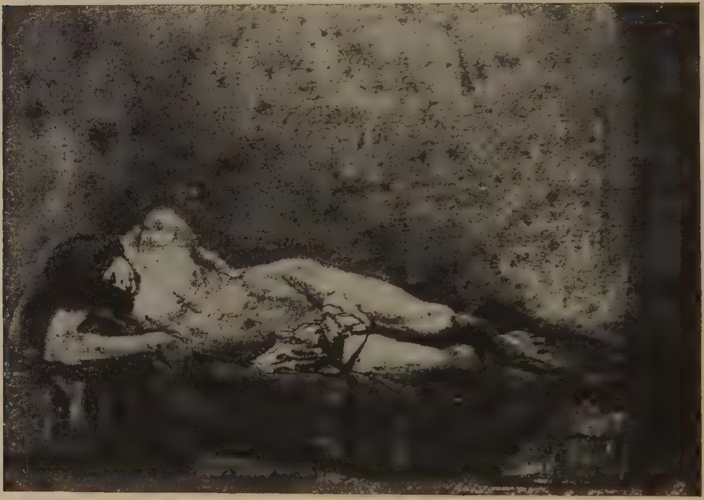

Fig. 93

The Projection—Northern Expression (Rembrandt)

So we have temples springing abruptly from a chaos of senses and hearts enclosed in a theological matrix, we have mind arched like a vault above a blood-stained pavement, we have multitudes hollowing out mountains, aqueducts striding over the plains like pursued monsters, forests growing on heaps of ruins that once were sanctuaries; mingled forces through which shines and moves that fire of the mind, music. . . . Music in which all the voices of consciousness and space unite to bear along confused souls in the victorious course of a single dominant soul.

We have the migrations of starving peoples across deserts, the tears of the unsatisfied in the warm nights, broken heads, rape, the blood-stained mud of war, the fever of the dance, the might of summer. Here a man's head lifts up because all these things have been. In another case we find millions of men, none of whom excel, but among whom an immense harmony breathes and reigns because a single man existed perhaps a thousand years before. The beating of so many hearts to create a single intelligence, the humility of so many intelligences to awaken a single heart! Every civilization seems to possess an intransigent unity, in spite of the permanent conflict of interests and passions that tend to dismember it, or precisely thanks to that conflict. We have had to rend our own selves in order to dissociate the elements of this civilization. It is one, unquestionably one, like a cry of love rising from a breast pierced by a sword. Nietzsche was more right than he knew. Was this true only of the Greeks? It is true of all of us. Nothing can exist anywhere, nothing, I maintain, unless the light of the intelligence springs entirely from the flame of the instincts.

In all ages and everywhere there is the struggle between Dionysius and Apollo, a struggle with no possible issue. None, I mean, unless it be the conquest, always pursued and never attained for more than a generation in the life of a people, for an hour in the life of a man, of an equilibrium, unstable and tending to destroy itself, between the mystical powers rising from the intoxication of the senses, involving a torrent of troubled images and ceaselessly reborn desires, and the intelligence that welcomes these sensations to enchain them on its heights. According to whether the spiritual balance inclines to one side or the other, whether in one place the great pantheistic flood, finding its order in itself, brings to its surface the mind that has risen from its depths, or whether in another the intellectual order traces through the harsh lights of the confused universe harmonious masses, rhythmical movements, and sure roads, one can grasp at a glance the art, religion, and history of all peoples, their flux, their reflux, and their reciprocal penetrations. . . . The adventure of man is a continuous oscillation between his irresistible desire to become an intelligent animal and his insatiable desire to remain a confused god. His victory is to be both, in the highest degree, but neither exclusively.

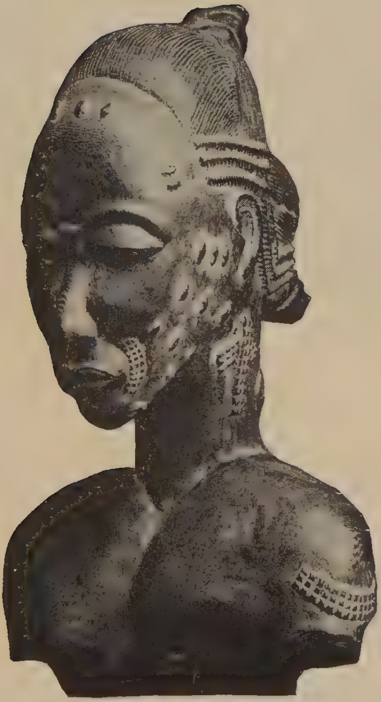

FIG. 93A

NEGRO SCULPTURE

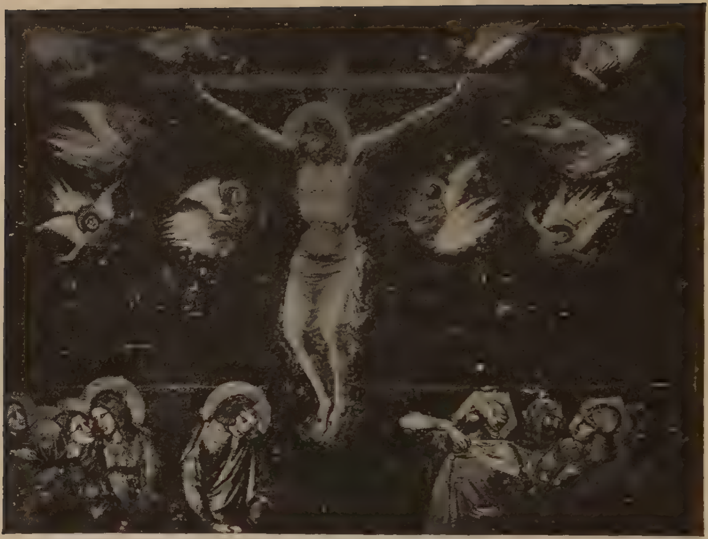

Fig. 94
Pietro Lorenzetti

Chapter IV. THE SEARCH FOR THE ABSOLUTE

I

ART and man are so intermingled that they seem to us, in the last analysis, the same pulse, beating the rhythm of history. Now, there is no question of man when one speaks or writes on art, even if one relates his life without omitting one of its details. Since the events of his life reverberate in himself alone, what purpose does it serve to tell them, if one does not hear what he says of them? See how people complain of not knowing Shakespeare, after *Hamlet* and *Othello, The Tempest*, and *King Lear*! The poem is the only sign by which the poet may be recognized, and it serves better to explain the adventures of the poet than these adventures serve to explain the poem and its creator. It is possible for one who has known Cervantes to fail to understand Don Quixote, but whoever knows Don Quixote understands Cervantes. The effort that man makes to reconcile in his work the contradictions that the chaos of appearances reveals to him defines the effort which he makes to conciliate in his heart the contradictions which are aroused there by the chaos of his feelings.

The mark of our passion is to wander without rest in the search for ourselves. The mark of our power is not to discover ourselves. Whoever has penetrated the mystery of himself no longer has to resolve the drama by projecting it into his work, with that heroic force which intoxicates the spectator. For a humanity that is conscious of its destinies, the spiritual world congeals immediately in death. It is poetry that saves it by organizing unceasingly the rhythm of its movement, of whose end it is ignorant. And through this it defines its misery and its grandeur. The hermetical quality of painting must be very profound for such a man as Pascal to have reproached the art with that "vanity" which "attracts admiration to the representations of things the originals of which one does not admire." Aside from Pascal himself who tells us what he thinks of them, are the "originals" of Pascal themselves so admirable? Strange blindness that finds a sound of humanity, feeble as this sound may be, in the conversation of his wig-maker, and refuses it to the language of Michael Angelo because he did not wish to learn it or did not know that he ought to learn it! If Pascal refused to speak to Michael Angelo, was not that so much the worse for Pascal?

The impression of security that the poem brings us measures the loftiness of the poet who has conceived it. But this impression is reserved uniquely for those who can grasp the relationship between the depths of the drama which he expresses and his power of expression. Painting, which does not exist aside from the heroes of painting, can reveal this relationship in an apple of Cézanne[1] placed on the corner of a table for all eternity, because the echoes that attach it to each point of space preserve the sound of the sentiments that have modeled the artist's heart. The degree of heroism to which a man may lay claim is proportionate to the violence of his passions. It is not for any of us to ignore them or subdue them, but to utilize them. If the creator is secretly devoured by envy, ambition, greed, lust, pride, or even vanity, we will put up with it. On one sole condition. This is that he recognize

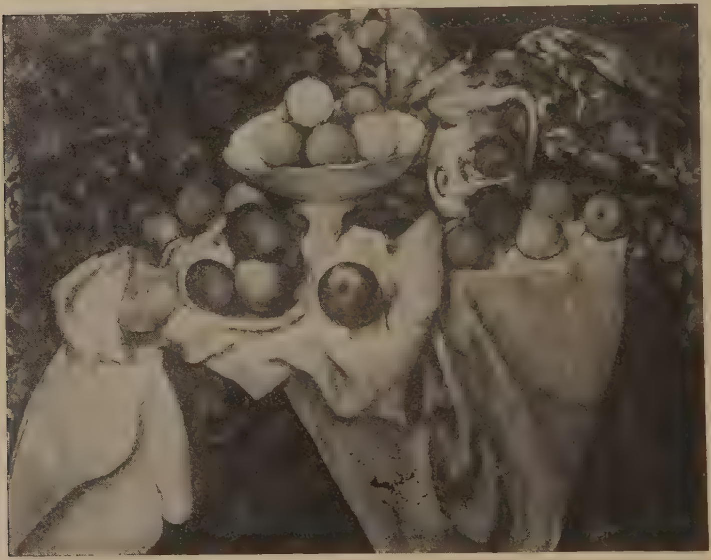

FIG. 95
DRAMA (Cézanne)

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[1] Fig. 95.

and that we recognize in him the resolute persistence of one incorruptible element: the will to disengage from the drama in which those passions rend themselves a form that is his own, that of a man like all the others in everything that defines man, save in this form. . . . This is not the place to make the portrait of the man. But I would begin with the portrait of the man if it were my intention to make the portrait of the creator.

This incorruptible element is at the heart of each of us. But scarcely one of us is capable of finding it there. It sleeps under too many age-old alluvial deposits, religion, laws, education especially, which is bent upon burying it, and those passions, secret demons, which the creator faces boldly when almost all of us yield to them with closed eyes. We have no difficulty in discovering it in the most paltry acts of interested activity, trade, the deed, the word, silence itself, the automatic acts of daily life, all the monotonous forms of the mysterious virtue that resists despair and leads us for better or worse to the avenues of death. Between the element which distinguishes the wig-maker and the one which distinguishes Pascal or Michael Angelo there is, after all, scarcely anything but a difference of quality. If I sketched that of Pascal or Michael Angelo, I should wish that their wig-maker might recognize in it the face of his own.

Every creator is a monstrous egoist. The only superiority before which Beethoven bowed—"goodness"—is not incompatible with the insatiable power that marks this egoism and is not without that natural radiance which we call generosity. But beware lest he pursue in a sort of clairvoyant hallucination an inner image to which he is obliged, in order to safeguard his original purity, to sacrifice everything if necessary—family, friendship, interest, if interest, friendship, family have the misfortune to place themselves between this image and himself. Balzac has written on this subject a book, *The Search for the Absolute*, since which no equivocation is possible. Neither the morality nor the goodness nor the innate nobility of Balthasar Claës can be disputed. The drama, on the contrary, lies in the contrast between his natural virtues and the intransigent passion that makes him Balthasar Claës and makes him even more cruel toward Balthasar Claës than toward anybody else, if something in him opposes his own satisfaction; for this passion is the incorruptible element that he must draw forth from its matrix, even if his children and his wife must suffer for it, his fortune must disappear, his health and his joy must be lost, his friends, either too docile or too severe, draw down upon themselves his disdain or his hatred, even if the whole world goes to ruin. . . .

This same element, I know, may inflict terrible ravages upon many poets whose "absolute" is only a very poor "comparative." But the greatest poet is inconceivable without it. When his life, seen from a distance, seems to us harmonious, we must give credit for it to his pride which advised him to undergo the martyrdom of solitude, or else to his entourage, where also no doubt there existed an incorruptible element that found its path in sacrifice. I do not see why the dominant passion of a superior nature should be less tyrannical—or even less respectable—than the other passions and should yield before them or before those of others. It alone, precisely, has the opportunity, by leading the others in its direction, to create a center of life against which a few are crushed, but about which millions of beings will gravitate some day. Because he followed to the ultimate consequences of its own logic, making no concession, the incorruptible element that he had discovered and developed in himself, Jesus Christ seems to me at once the most complete of egoists and the most accomplished of creators. It is impossible for a man to offer himself to his family or his country or his friend as a sacrifice, if he offers himself as a sacrifice to his vision of the universe.

This pitiless need that rises from the depths of the unconscious in order to people the mind with images and give to the will the command to realize them is the true salt of the earth and the food of heroes. I am thinking of the destinies of the majority of the masters, so diverse, but in whom one almost always discovers this fury to experience life through and through, whether one leaves one's flesh behind or takes the flesh of others, in order to follow a phantom which becomes insubstantial the moment one touches it and which, as soon as it has escaped, resumes a fixed form, always the same, always new, never leaving one any rest until one has seized it to experience a brief intoxication and one more disappointment.

I think of Ghirlandajo, weighed down with children and orders, always behind in his work, talking of covering all the walls of Florence with paintings. I think of Signorelli disrobing the corpse of his son in order to paint it, suppressing his tears, his heart contracted in an anguish composed of creative fever and sorrow. I think of Tintoretto living in a torment of continuous fecundation, shut up for days and nights, painting by lamplight, in order to people convents and churches with the tormented forms that unceasingly germinated in him. I think of Michael Angelo locked up for fifty-four months in the Sistine with his bread and his jug of water, coming out staggering, emaciated, drained dry, blinded by the daylight. I think of Rubens whose colossal creation cleaves life like the keel of a ship, his pomp, his embassies, his love affairs being nothing but the spray of the wake behind him. I think of Rembrandt leaving everything, success, friendships, fortune, a method of painting legible to all, to allow ruin, poverty, intoxication perhaps to establish themselves in his household, because one day he had surprised in himself an image of the world that was like nothing but his own self. I think of Poussin refusing the presents of the King of France because he saw every day, on the threshold of his little house on the Pincio, the motives of his emotion renewing themselves for him. I think of Goya, green with fear, suspected by the Inquisition, suspected by the Bourbons, suspected by the French, but rather than not paint with his jets of fire or attack his copper with vitriol, peppering the Inquisition with arrows, boxing the ears of the Bourbons, butchering the French. I think of Gros, old and illustrious, pursuing his fugitive form to the very reeds of the Seine and plunging his mouth in the mud in order to drink it there along with death. I think of Constable to whom the verdant humidity of the fields, the growing shoots, the sprouting herbs repeat without ever wearying him: "I am the resurrection and the life." I think of Cézanne, bent over his ungrateful work, deaf to all the sounds of the world, shut up for thirty years among fools, painting like a madman for the relief of the monster whom he feels in himself alone, forgetting his canvas in the fields because he has caught sight of some flame rising before his soul. I think of Renoir, a human ruin, ossified, warped with rheumatism, unable either to get up or lie down and creating incessantly the breasts, the bellies of women, roses and anemones, from the brush fastened to his fist. I think of Hokusaï, the "old man mad over drawing," affirming that at the age of one hundred and ten he would at last know how to give life to this point, to this line.

I think of those artisans without genius, the sick Cellini, dragging himself from his bed to cast his pewter vessel into the mold where the bronze of his Perseus

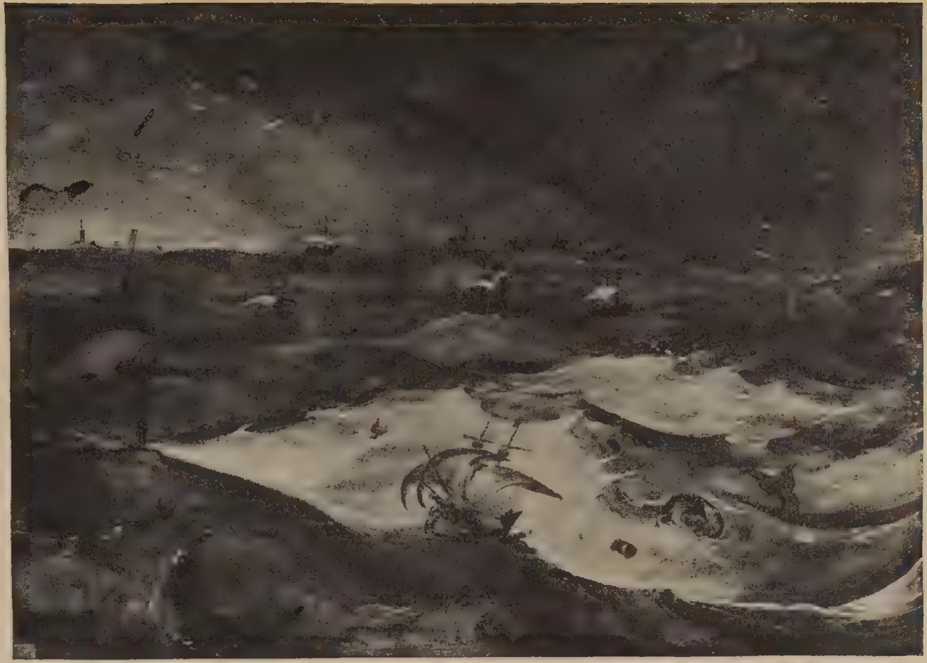

Fig. 96

Toward the Fleece (P. Breughel)

was liquefying too slowly, of the poverty-stricken Palissy burning the wood of his floors and his furniture in order to heat his plates. I think of all those Italians wandering from city to city, Giotto, Taddeo Gaddi, Uccello, Gozzoli, Lippi, Piero della Francesca, Pinturicchio, Sodoma, without a roof to cover them, paid by the piece, mad with science and painting, for whom it was a passionate adventure to decorate some little chapel in a forgotten village, as jealous of one another as lovers, exhausting their genius in the effort to conquer that clenched their passion about an idea like a hand about a dagger.

I think of those good companions of Flanders or France, setting out on foot for Italy where glittered the golden fleece, painting sign-boards on the way for a living, Fouquet, Breughel, Van der Weyden, Van Orley, Courtois, Mignard, Bourdon, Coypel, Duquesnoy, Puget, Girardou, of the child Callot following a band of gypsies, of Claude Lorrain becoming a cook, then a household servant in order to live there, of Parrocel taken prisoner by pirates while seeking to land there. I think of the engravers of Egyptian hypogeums, making the shadows blossom with feminine forms, palms, shimmering water, of the Chinese or Hindu sculptors scooping out their mountains, peopling their immense caves with their swarming gods. I know very well that in these cases it was the mystic passion that drove them to bury themselves alive or roast themselves in the sunlight on the vertical wall. But is not the search for the incorruptible element that constitutes his inevitable form precisely, even in the atheist, a mystical passion before which all the others are forced to abdicate? Mystical, that is to say, eager to confront a mystery that is common only to himself and God. I think of the confession of Pascal who, after having denounced literary vanity, wonders, if he does not hope that his notes will be found at the bottom of some drawer. The poet must teach men sooner or later that something essential to the development of their quality as men comes from his quality as a man, the only one which belongs to himself alone.

II

There is only one passion that can thwart the development of the peculiar purity that is in each of us and which the rôle of the poet is to discover and define in himself. Love is our purity, the only certitude that imposes on our entire being deeds for which we are not responsible, since they blend completely with its nature and its methods. The cruelty of the poet is only the carrying over into the spiritual plane of the cruelty of love in the sentimental plane, and as the cruelty of beings who are a prey to love ceases when love ceases, the cruelty of the poet ceases at the cessation of the resistance of the obstacle between his image and himself. The poet is the fatal force that maintains in the intelligence the necessary continuity which love is charged to maintain in the species for ends which neither the species nor the poet, nor even love knows. There is between love and the creative power an identity of substance which all poets feel, because these two forces contradict themselves by turns or annihilate one another or exalt themselves through one another, following circumstances and the moment.

Michelet said one should only write to "put love off the scent." Hence that incomparable intoxication when love appears, because the certitude of being in the eternal verity of one's own purity still further surpasses that which one tastes in the creative fever—which is only its transposition. Hence those terrible conflicts when love, swallowing up all the powers of the being as well as its spiritual reserves that have been drawn violently into the zone of the conflagration, gives us the impression of absorbing with them our faculty of creating and all its possibilities of future development. Hence, when it passes, the prodigious fecundity with which it has endowed our hearts by sowing in them the inexhaustible seeds of grief and pleasure. Nothing resembles more the passage of one form into another form, of one sound into another sound, of one idea into another idea, than the passage from one embrace to another, from one voluptuous sensation to another, and this constant proximity in the depths of pleasure, of sentimental despair and the physical intoxication that one finds, on the heights of the mind, in the permanent association of lyrical intoxication with the anguish of death. People have tried to see a revenge of the soul in the victory of ideal form over the so-called bestial powers that shut us off from access to our ideal. Why revile in this way the most imperious of the instincts, that is to say the noblest, and veil in sublime pretexts our self-interested recoil before the sufferings and the disasters which it inflicts? An admirable unity presides over the perpetuation of animal life of which thought and art are only the supreme flower. The idea is essentially sensual and the animality of the poem is the fated and efficacious function of its spirituality.

The proof of this is that all the religions are organized about the sexual problem. All the myths of ancient paganism are concerned with love. Brahmanism accepts the drama in all its consequences. The ethics of the Persians, the Jews, the Chinese make of the entire social order a system designed to master its violence. Islam offers it as a reward in death for a life that has submitted to the law. Christianity, on the contrary, sees in the conquest of salvation the eternal ransom from original sin.

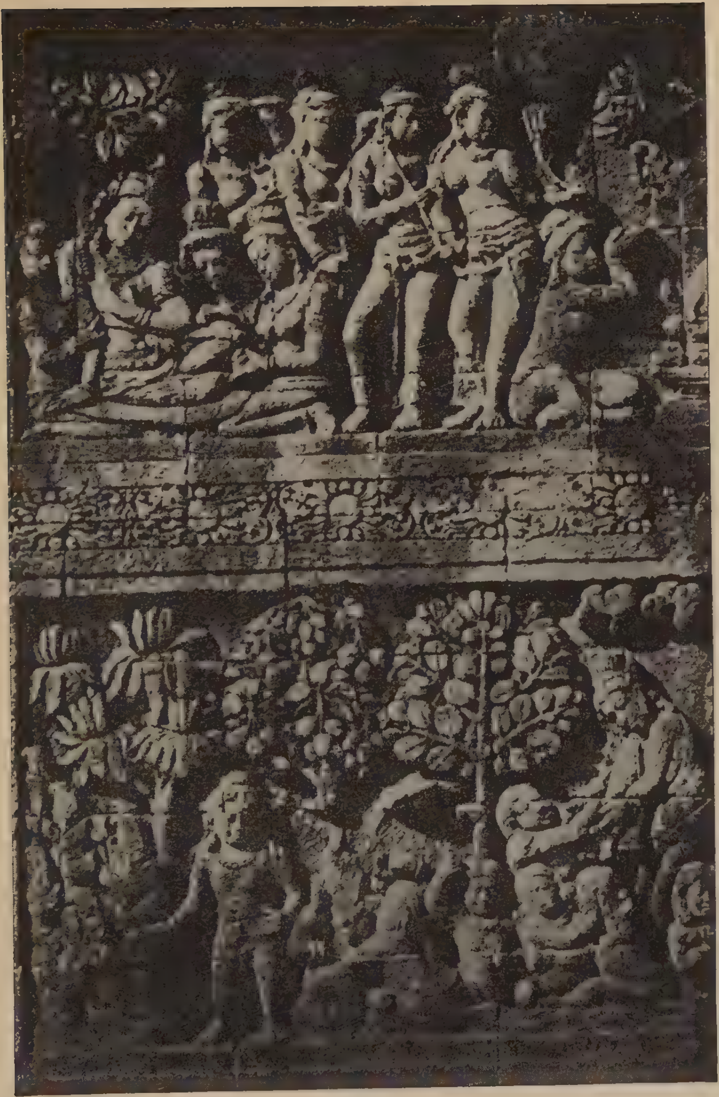

Fig. 97

Sexual Spirituality (Java)

And art is almost constantly, in the course of history, only the illustration of these ideas through their confirmation even when it believes it is combating them, or their refutation even when it pretends to be supporting them. It is thus that the spiritual force which ends in Buddhism disengages itself from the sexual orgy with which Brahmanism has covered the rocks of India and that the spiritual force of Buddhism provokes in its turn, in China, in Java, in Cambodia, an orgy of form that fills the forests and peoples the deserts with temples where the dance, love, naked women under the leafy trees form the almost permanent motive of decoration.[1] It is thus that Christianity appeared in Asia as a reaction against the sanguinary sensuality of the Phœnician and Syrian cults, and could spread through Europe only by proclaiming itself the antithesis of the cult of physical beauty of which the people were weary. It is thus that the Jewish-Christian prohibition of the idol, the receptacle of carnal love, ends in the paradox of introducing Christianity into the heart of the Occidental peoples through the Byzantine, French and Italian idols, the swarm of which led, with the Renaissance, to the rehabilitation of love.

Thus, in the species as in the individual, every great creative vein exhausts itself in the way that love does when the senses and the feelings separate from one another and the creative act, more and more skillful, becomes less and less ardent and more and more forced. By degrees it prostitutes itself. It turns into a habit which divine modesty speedily deserts. A wearisome practice, mechanical and monotonous, gradually replaces the natural and radiant expansion of love. Where the man lived, where the idol was only a passionate image of the man, the "artist" appeared, he who manufactures the idol because the idol sells—the "artist"—

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[1] Figs. 97, 202.

he who makes of art an illustrious and fruitful career, whose work responds henceforth to certain formulas that are learned and transmitted and gradually lose from sight even the remote pretexts that have given birth to them. Art can do nothing but take refuge in a few solitary hearts when the "artist" arises, the artist, that parasite, unknown to civilizations during their period of strength, he who appeared in Europe toward the fourth Greek century, began again to play his deplorable rôle after the Renaissance, and in our day has transformed academies and schools into asso-

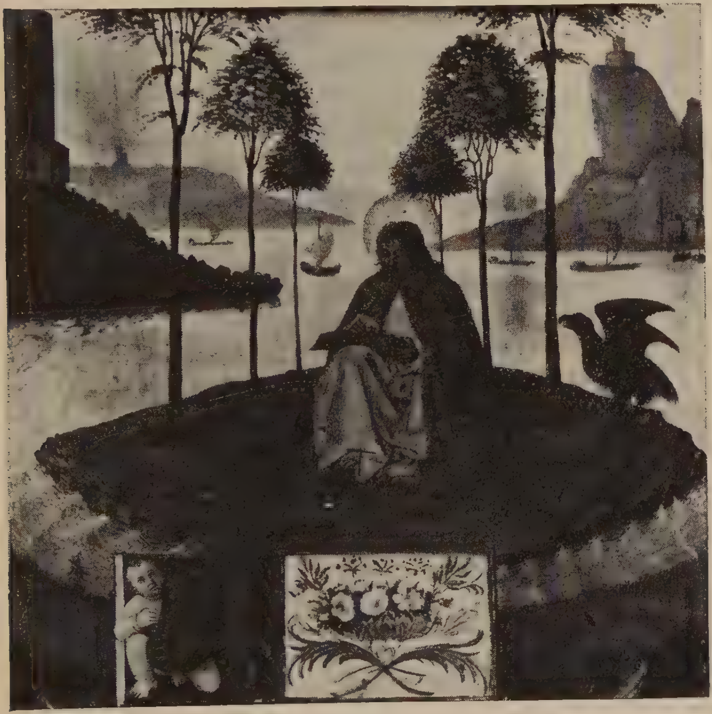

FIG. 98
HUMILITY (Fouquet)

ciations of private interests, surrounded by a servile multitude from which the official mandarinate of each generation is recruited.

It is certainly difficult to indicate the line that separates the "artist" from the poet, the more so that it fluctuates, and as there are differences of quality, or even of quantity in the domain of living creation. One cannot place on the same plane, whatever Diderot may have thought, a cabinet-maker, however admirable, and Rembrandt, or even Moreau the Younger and Rembrandt. A sincere heart may beat in the breast of a man whose spirit is only agreeable or distinguished. We cannot pretend, on the other hand, that no creative force ever surprises us beneath a weary skill or an affected sentiment half-heartedly displayed. Van Dyck and Reynolds are aware, at certain hours, of their mundane servitude. Greuze does not always display shamelessly his sentimental merchandise. The eloquence of Le Brun is not always devoid of muscles. It sometimes happens that the Dutch anecdotists catch a charming relationship between the glove of the physician and the vial of his draught. Often a tender desire is lit at the tip of a breast touched by the brush of Fragonard. Tiepolo's sleight-of-hand does not wholly prevent him from perceiving the silver that quivers in a cloud like the feathers of a wing or the petals of a flower. The great illusion never gives way all at once, it has moments when the flame revives, which very often indeed render its failure all the sadder. . . . One can only say this, which would suffice, if the majority of us had eyes to see and ears to hear: where love is, however light, however superficial, however fugitive, there is man. The "artist" is elsewhere.

A state of innocence, without which the amorous illusion cannot exist, characterizes any one who discovers in himself the more or less powerful means of

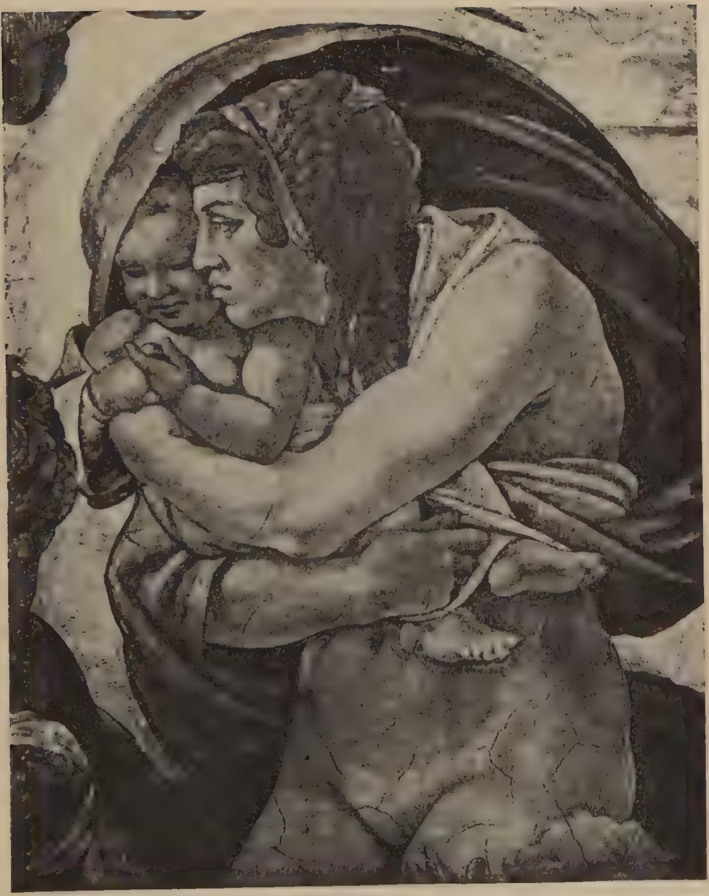

FIG. 99

VISUAL CLARITY (Michael Angelo)

confessing his quality as a man, and this is true of the humblest sort of creative work, that of the potter and the upholsterer, the carpenter and the glass-maker, the jeweler and the dressmaker, the florist and the currier—in whom this state of innocence is spontaneous, without deep anguish, without a glance thrown upon death and the uselessness of everything—as well as in the highest summits of spiritual grandeur, in Michael Angelo, Shakespeare, Rembrandt, Pascal, Beethoven, in whom this state of innocence is a conquest without respite over doubt and despair. It appears that unusual spirits exist midway between the two classes, especially in the art of France where unstudied moderation, discreet confidence, a sort of familiarity between the object and the mind, an indifferent disposition toward great lyrical expansion have always marked, at each and every epoch, the most perfect creators.

With the image-makers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with Fouquet, with Chardin, with Corot,[1] one finds this joy of confessing a charming emotion, the emotion of a child who is always marveling at his discovery of the world, and a constant simplicity in telling the circumstances that everywhere else defines the humblest worker in wood or clay, in flowers or glass, in wool or metal. This is the case with La Fontaine who belongs, like Shakespeare, to high literature but prefers talking with his gardener about the sprouting of his lettuces and the habits of snails. A unique gift, it seems to me, when—quite possibly—a man is not unaware of the drama of creation but possesses the very rare and miraculous faculty of masking it completely, while all about him is the turmoil of wings in the storm, a panting effort, a constant tension toward a dizzy equilibrium in which primitive innocence is only recovered for the space of a flash of lightning. Here in this pitiless

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[1] Fig. 98.

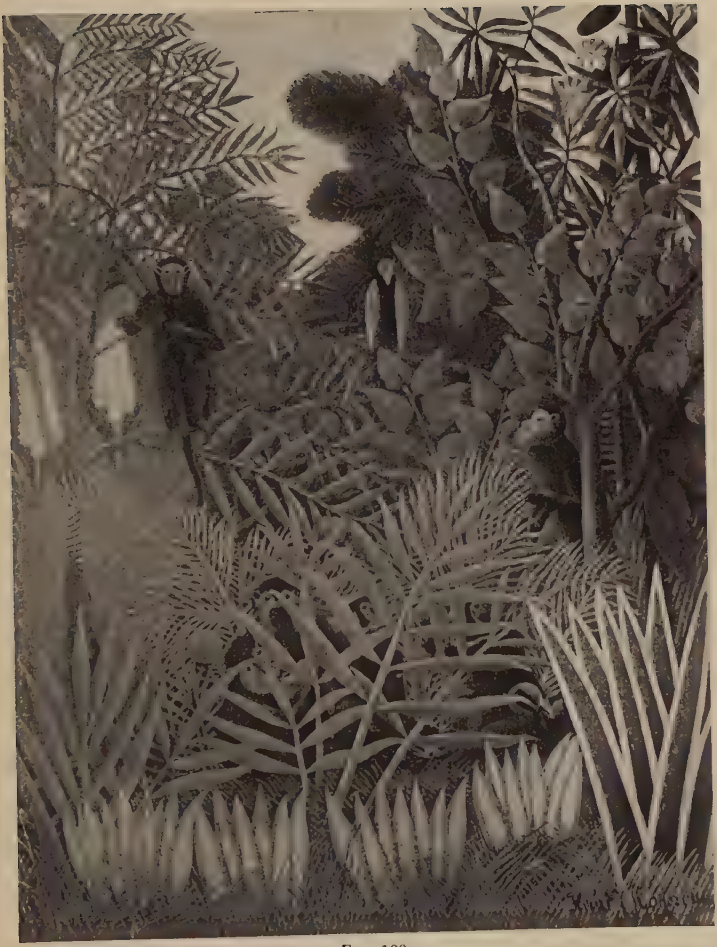

Fig. 100

Ingenuousness (Henri Rousseau)

lucidity, that never loses sight of the abyss while it dances on the heights, does there exist more depth than there where the feet move over grass and the glance seems to find only limited horizons, made up of woods and rivers? I do not know. But there is as much love in it. And it is love that matters, first of all. The custom-house officer, Rousseau, is much closer to Michael Angelo than his most perfect imitators ever approached.[1]

III

This being said, it seems to me that a second growth of ingenuousness, that of a Michael Angelo—that which resists the clairvoyant interpretation of facts, that which is fortified by suffering, which the intelligence, far from wearing out gradually achieves, has a higher quality than the careless ingenuousness of experiment that is little sensitive to disappointment and over which the intelligence never dreams of exercising any control—the ingenuousness of a Rousseau.

No doubt nothing can replace the pure force of instinct, the confused fervor that rises from the whole being upon contact with the sensible world and seizes the brute image in order to fecundate it. But when it springs from its roots, intelligence is the flower of instinct. The intelligence chooses, redresses, eliminates. It establishes between events and objects the proportions that stand out against a choice, if the hesitant instinct is feeble, but reinforce it if the instinct is strong. There, again, it is like love. A passion at its height is exalted by the greatest obstacles. In its decline the smallest obstacle makes it doubt and yield. The intelligence feeds on the bones and viscera of instinct and then, having purified the nourishment it has received, renders it back whence it came. Nothing can compare with this common ascent toward the peak where lives the phantom tracked and pursued by these two entwined beings. A lucid intoxication becomes the portion of the man who has discovered his natural medium by the light of an incessantly active meditation and, thanks to it, frees it from the dross and the foreign deposits that hide it from him. As he knows that his tears and his pleasures nourish it, he accepts his tears and his pleasures with a light heart. If you doubt the fecundity of this intimate association, compare the "Syndics of the Drapers" with the "Lesson in Anatomy"[1]; in the former, the academic grouping, the even and waxy material, education interposing between the universe and the painter to conceal his emotion from him, and in the latter these men of flesh and blood watching, this poignant matter triturated with blood and fire, the painter standing alone and facing the drama of living and discovering himself in it.

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[1] Fig. 99, 100.

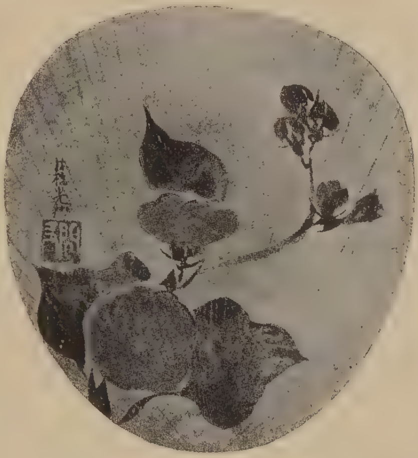

FIG. 101

DECORATION (Korin)

When this slow, anxious discovery of himself is necessary, when, instead of divining in the shadow the moving forms which one can only outline gropingly and define stammeringly, one can also, thanks to the increasing light, dovetail them into one another to make a single block which the spirit models and cements, it seems as if the second threshold of the mystery had been passed, before which the simple-minded stop without even seeing it. I believe it is very great to obey with enthusiasm the most imperious of the instinctive forces that lead us toward an end where we alone can walk. I believe it is still greater to justify and increase this enthusiasm by discovering that the mission of the conscience is to disembarrass this force of everything that does not belong to it. Driven out of paradise through knowledge, we aspire to enter it again through love. The faculty of projecting life in an imaginary form is the animality of man raised, by a sublime operation, to the dignity of the spirit. Everything that expresses the simple man, the poor man, the beast scarcely emerging from his most thwarted impulses and his elementary need to create for himself a shelter, tools for work, primitive cadences to facilitate this work and give it rhythm, finds itself solely in the highest consciences which do nothing, after all, but spiritualize this need. This is not found, half-way along the road, in the "cultivated" man, nourished on erudition, rotten with education, frozen with science.

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[1] Figs. 102, 103.

I recall once arriving at Piræus, where the delicious little houses with their triangular pediments, tinted red or blue, gave me the sudden and irresistible impression that this had been the popular architecture of this place for three thousand years, and that it was more closely related to that of the Parthenon which I saw, a few leagues away, on its natural base, than the skillful reconstructions that housed the universities and the banks of modern Athens, not to speak of the Madeleine, the British Museum, or the various Pinacotheks of Munich. And precisely the same day, I heard on the Acropolis a young Greek student translate for me the probably immemorial peasant laments in which I recognized the accent of the curses of Prometheus. Who does not know, for that matter, the close relationship of the popular songs to the greatest music which borrows their themes and rhythms at every moment? This dish, this pot modeled by earthy hands and placed in the oven with the bread—yesterday or a thousand years ago—reproduced the motifs and the harmonic relationships that are found, like an invincible command of the soil, the sky, the cultures, the race, in the rarest harmonies of the most powerful creators. Are not the image-makers, the glaziers, the lead-workers, of the cathedral artisans comparable with the ballad-writers of all nations, with the potters and tapestry-weavers of Persia, China, Africa, the old provinces of Europe, with the painters and sculptors of the Egypt of antiquity? Has not a great master of the spiritual synthesis, Korin,[1] given for three centuries his formulas to all the decorative work of Japan? I have seen sheaves of flowers, painted on the black varnish of a hotel bed by a Florentine workman. They reminded me at once of the bouquets and garlands of the canvases of Botticelli, Lippi, Pollaiuolo, Ghirlandajo, with which the most medaled pictures of the professors and the exhibition artists of the region, who imitate them, have absolutely no relationship. These are facts of everyday observation, almost a commonplace for those who consent to give heed, and they express the organic continuity of "tradition" much more authentically than all the educations, all the formulas, all the groups, all the recompenses imagined for preserving appearances. It is not by his collar that one recognizes the dog.

The question of the creative conscience has always been badly stated. Due to a false point of departure people have confounded or tried to confound with the search for effects called "literary" in so many bad painters, that sense of the universal which every work expresses and cannot fail to express and whose continuity and logic define in some degree the existence, the absence, or the degree of quality. Every work of art, as well as every intelligence, is and cannot be anything else than an abridged system of the world. Whatever the value of this system of the world, or rather whatever the value of its coherence and the depth of its relationships with man as he has appeared at all times—that is the value of this work. The pagan system, the Christian system, the pantheistic system, the spiritualistic system have produced by turns or simultaneously works of about equal value that depend, in the last analysis, less on the value of the system than on the passional value of the man, or the men whose

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[1] Fig. 101.

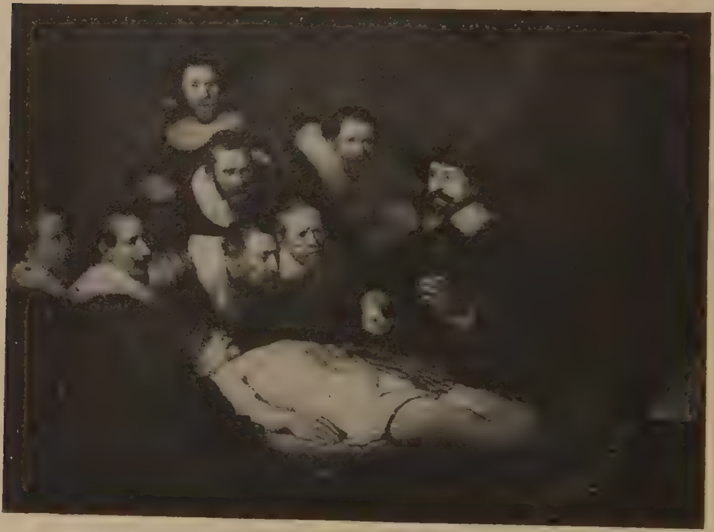

Fig. 102
Science (Rembrandt)

faith and intelligence have been determined and oriented by this system, or who had the power and the courage, during the period when this system fell, to imagine another for their personal use.

Plastic language is even more of a language than one might suppose. It is a manner of speaking because it is a manner of thinking. It is even probable that it adjusts more strictly than verbal language its manner of speaking to its manner of thinking. It can express ideas and the relations of ideas which the sculptor or the painter would be altogether powerless to translate into words. It is even desirable for him not to know how to do it, for he would cease to be a sculptor or a painter and become a writer and would lose, in the meanderings of discourse, the simplicity, the coherence, and the vigor of his thought. The grandeur of a spirit is not bound up with its faculties of discourse, but with its greater or less

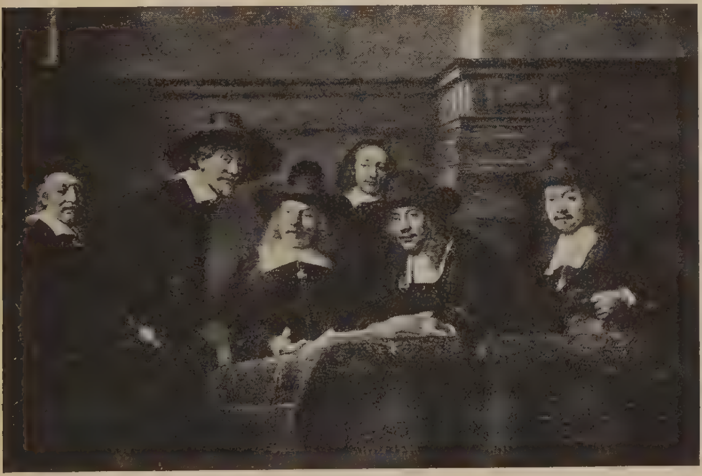

Fig. 103

Consciousness (Rembrandt)

power of expressing, in whatever language, that which it conceives. And because Cézanne would not always understand the language of Hegel, I do not see why Cézanne should be a less great spirit than Hegel, who, I imagine, would have understood no better the language of Cézanne. Philosophy itself is only a manner of speaking. The inaptitude of Rubens for general ideas seems to me as difficult to sustain as the aptitude of Teniers,[1] and from this point of view I perceive a distance between the two comparable to that which separates, for example, Spinoza and Crebillon *fils*. A personality of this stature is an indivisible thing in which sensation, idea, and expression are firmly united, intuitively and without possible debate.

Here an ambiguity appears that must be removed. It seems to me useless for Rembrandt to read Spinoza, and it seems to me deplorable that Greuze should have read Diderot. General culture seems to me useful to a painter as soon as he passes beyond the unconscious stage, if at the same time he possesses a sufficient mastery over his methods as a painter to be able to incorporate that culture in his painting in such a way that the passage is not noticeable even to a trained eye. But the direct influence of philosophy on painting has never been very valuable, the painter, if he has a weak soul, being tempted to force the language of painting to make it utter the things that philosophy alone has the power to utter in its own language and cannot utter otherwise. If Phidias resisted the influence of Anaxagoras whose discourses he followed, it was because he did not try to express in his sculpture the ideas of Anaxagoras, but because he recognized in his own ideas the ideas of the other, because he bathed, like him, in a spiritual current which the historic moment and the phase traversed by Greek thought at this instant determined both around the two men and in them. The same thing happened in the case of Descartes the philosopher and Le Nôtre the gardener who, very happily, had not read Descartes, not being capable of understanding him, and because of this came much closer to him.

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[1] Fig. 104.

I do not say that it is enough to have read Æschylus to understand at the same time the *Centaurs and the Lapithæ* at Olympia,[1] or that it would be useless to read Æschylus when one has understood the *Centaurs and the Lapithæ.* I say that it is impossible that one or the other of these works should not emerge from a common matrix of ideas and sentiments, each being like the other the summit of the spiritual drama, unique in Greek thought, where one may see the will of man emerging suddenly from a murderous and intoxicating sexual orgy in order to attempt to master it. One easily finds similar correspondences between the thought of Aristotle and the anatomical sculpture of Lysippus, between the thought of Saint Benedict and Roman architecture, between the thought of Abelard and the sculpture of the thirteenth century, between the thought of Voltaire and the paint-

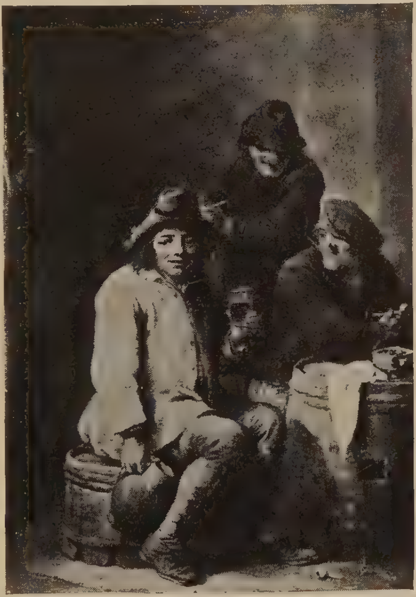

FIG. 104
MEDIOCRITY (Teniers)

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[1] Fig. 1.

ing of the eighteenth, between the thought of Auguste Comte and Claude Bernard and the painting of Ingres and Courbet, between the various anarchistic systems and French Impressionism.

It would be a little puerile to pursue these parallels, which have been made too often, and sometimes awkwardly, and which can be found everywhere and at all epochs. But it is necessary to point out their origins and meaning and that they almost always appear, to safeguard their vigorous progress, in the plane of the unconscious. Philosophy, like art, comes from the necessities of the hour. Food must be found, ramparts must be raised, the spiritual current must flow through the arteries of the race. These necessities command the concepts of philosophy quite as much as they drive art to raise up on the cross-roads our great puppets besmeared with ochre, blue, and vermilion. Philosophy is no more conscious than art of the determinations which, in a given place and a given time, cause them both to respond to the imperious appeal of certain general needs. Art is not less conscious than philosophy of the means it employs to satisfy these needs.

IV

The poet, in the last analysis, is the realizer of the sum of superior energies created by the humble efforts of multitudes of men to earn their bread. He expresses the general aspect of this effort—and better than the philosopher who explains it.

He is the immediately extinguished consciousness of life that realizes itself, the affirmation of the victory of organisms newly-born over organisms that have worn themselves away. He is the eternal sage, who has the hardihood, amid fools and weak men, to transpose all the exterior forces into a personal form that is a new world, articulated from one end to the other, in which all men of his time should recognize each other and in which a few men of all times should do the same. The dramatic search for his inner unity, in which his sensuality and his consciousness meet and reach an equilibrium in spite of continuous lacerations, and no doubt thanks to them, is his very reason for being, since, in the measure that he raises himself in the mystery of this unity, his sensuality and his consciousness increase and the end to be attained continually recedes. His desire is made up of scattered sensations, in each of which he finds only a fragment of the definitive image which he believes he can seize in every new work and of which every new work, through its very realization, delivers to him only a vain shadow capable of attracting others but fading away for him. It is he who resists indefinitely the successive crumblings of the illusions he pursues. It is he whose passion survives in experience and who maintains a state of love in the universe by maintaining it in his heart.

He is the bond through which the inner life of men appears to us uninterrupted. It is in fact impossible for him not to bear witness to that which has constituted the capital spiritual event of his time and his species, one that neither his time nor his species seems to have perceived. As the nourishment derived from the air and the rain rises from the soil to swell and ripen the fruit, so he carries in him the atavisms and the dispersed energies that mark him as the most moving testimony of an epoch. And it is through him and through him alone that this epoch reaches us.

When we say of such and such a poet that he is great in having understood his epoch, we take, at least partly, the effect for the cause. In reality we see his epoch thus because he has commanded us to do so. Lyricism never describes the event of the hour. It does not recount memories. Its presentiments have no need of exteriorizing themselves in the pretext of an imagined adventure. Memory, the hour, presentiment, everything transforms itself unknown to him. It is they that make the reds of this canvas more cruel, its blacks sadder, its greens more biting, its grays more subtle, its blues more aerial. They that render more trenchant or more sinuous the profile of this statue, impaste it with more or less of shadow, make it stir through the expression of its sharp reliefs or radiant through the simplicity and the silence of its planes. No recent event, no ancient event is foreign to this profound anxiety which is in the very substance of the poet, to the sudden flashing of the desires and enthusiasms that rise from his anguish, to the waves of suffering that pass over his pleasures. The ancient landscapes that he has passed through influence the sensations that stir him now and these present sensations are closely bound up with the loves that have fashioned them and the bereavements that have rendered them strong.

Will you tell me that it is thus with every man? No doubt. And as I have said from the first line, one does not find the poet if one does not look for the man in him. But we cannot recover any footprint but that of the poet, since he is the only one among us whose step is vigorous enough to leave its print upon the road. I know very well that there are all-powerful men who walk there stealthily, as if they feared to shake the pavement. I do not think their influence will be lost. It passes, from place to place, in pure, silent echoes in neighboring consciences, to expand some day in some poem occasionally very remote from it. So also passes what we consider the lost effort of the humblest folk, the humblest beasts, the plants, the very minerals, light, and waters. But it is this poem, alone, which consti-

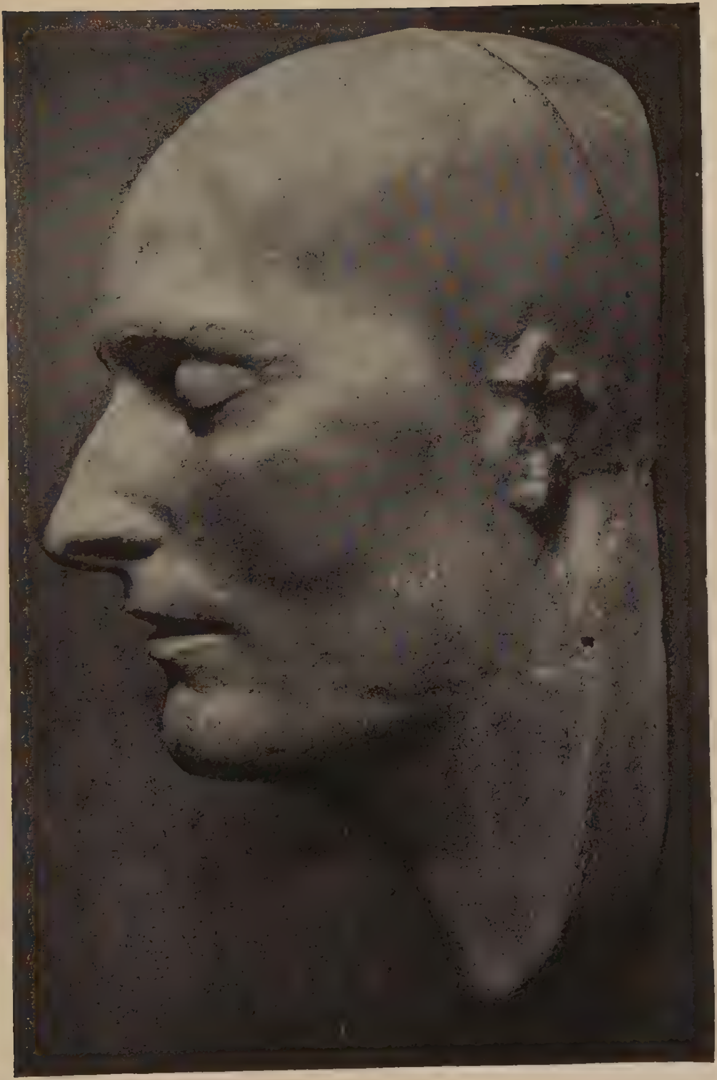

Fig. 105.

Visage of Action

tutes visibly the reversions of history, unimaginable without it.

There is also, no doubt, action, the great adventurous action that traverses the inertia of crowds to attract them to it as a magnet draws steel filings. Action through word or deed, that which determines and orients the allegiance of hearts, that of Zoroaster or Moses, of Sakyamuni or Confucius, of Rama or David, of Sylla or Jesus, of Saint Paul or Tamerlane, or Mahomet or Napoleon.[1] Action, to which men subject themselves with joy in order to live symphonically about it, as the colors about the painter, the sounds about the musician. It does not differ from the poem save through the language it speaks, and there is, between the two, a permanent exchange and intercrossing of influences, the conqueror springing from the Bible or the Temple which in their turn spread abroad and legitimize his action. Action, which is beneficent through the material or spiritual edifices which it raises, malignant through the ruins which it makes, like the poem itself, both the supreme expression, intensified and monstrous, of life, devastating and fecundating, but necessary for propagating that formidable indifference to maintaining an illusion without which it could not exist.

Do you doubt perhaps this fecundating action, you who have heard the tempest of the Sistine, whom Shakespeare has lulled in the surge of the worlds, and who have felt the royal-heartedness of man over things in the music of Beethoven or the epopee of Balzac? But if you doubt this devastating action, count the victims of Phidias, who were and still are almost as numerous as the victims of Jesus. See in what state Michael Angelo left his Italy, Rubens his Flanders, Rembrandt his Holland. The country where such beings have passed seems ravaged, empty of its forms, condemned for ages to sterility. They have the power of fire. They leave nothing behind but ashes. But these ashes constitute the richest of fertilizers.

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[1] Fig. 105.

If life has a meaning, then it is the artistic feeling of man that imposes this upon it, beyond Good and Evil, beyond the Beautiful and the Ugly, beyond the True and the False, by creating with energy and enthusiasm the spiritual forms to which the multitude rallies with all the more facility because its masters impose upon these forms a sentimental significance in order to facilitate its approach to them. Whether he destroys or whether he spreads despair to attain one of these forms, his own proper form, the poet is he who never ceases to have confidence precisely because he does not attach himself to any port, does not fasten himself by any anchor, but pursues this one form that flies through the storm and is lost unceasingly in the eternal becoming. He attempts to substitute for the human and natural disorder that wounds him a divine order that he will never find, fortunately for his confidence,—the divine order being nothing but the definitive adaptation and consequently the death of a definitive man to a definitive world. Man is condemned, through the play of his very spirit, to clench his hand about granite and feel the sand flowing between his fingers, but it is this frightful drama which constitutes precisely the majesty of his spirit. Outside this illusion, there is nothing but love of ruins, discouraged respect for that which dies or is dead, fear of dying, fear of living. The Greeks piling up the statues mutilated[1] by the Persians in the earthworks of the Parthenon of Pericles seem to me to have lived the symbol of this ardent research which will not, which cannot, which should not be arrested. In the general movement of a humanity that seeks to survive itself, every generation is a wave that seeks to survive itself, every man is a drop of water that seeks to survive itself, and it is this, perhaps, which is the principal aspect of God.

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[1] Fig. 8.

Which of us does not make, by means of his own power, a gigantic effort to endure one instant more, an instant which he imagines to be rich in possibilities? The priest, opening to the faithful the gates of eternal life, opens them to his own hope. The conqueror and the legislator seize a fragment of time which they call history to quicken their action. The savant marks off a fragment in which he inscribes a law to eternalize his own. The humblest girl, through maternity, believes she is taking possession of the future. The peasant enlarges the property that he will leave behind him. The imbecile builds for himself a mausoleum. Frostratus burns the Temple. The poet, who tries to incorporate time and space in his inner life so that they will merge with it and in this way pass with it into the future determination of the intelligence and the sensibility of men is undoubtedly not the least illusioned among them. But it is possible—and probable—that his illusion may be the most fruitful and the most noble of all, because his realization orients the reality of the spirit.

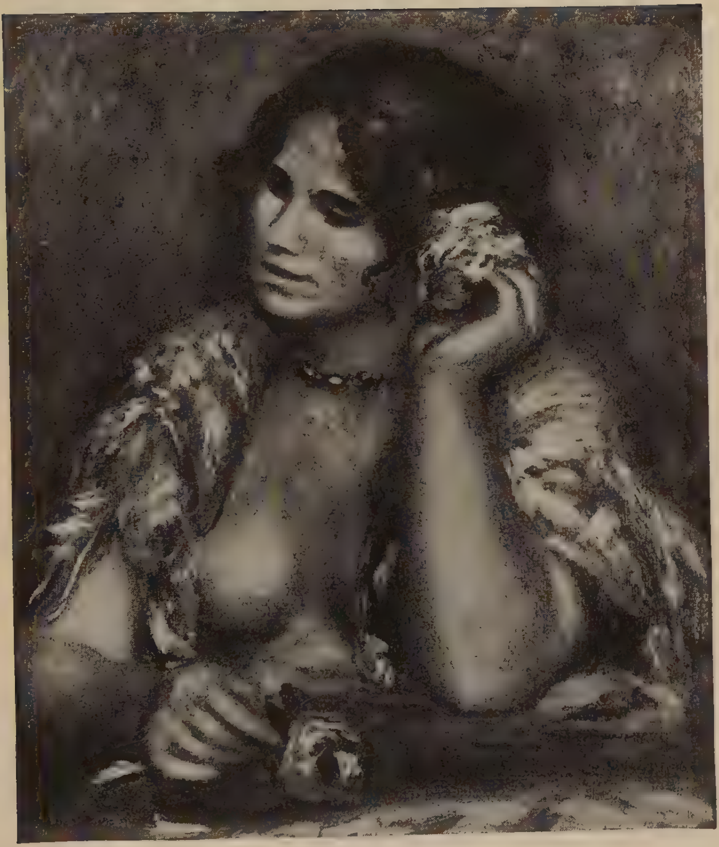

Fig. 105a

Renoir

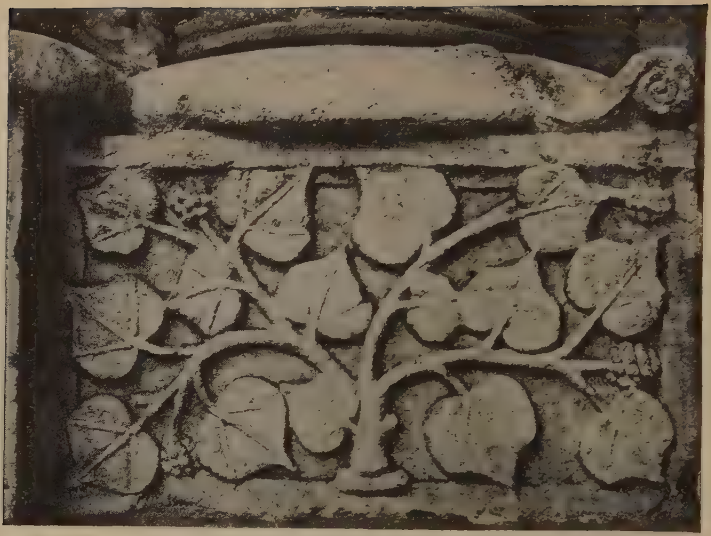

FIG. 106
CHARTRES

Chapter V. THE POETRY OF KNOWLEDGE

I

ONE step more and we are at the threshold of the thought of Baudelaire in which the apparent antinomy between art and science is resolved in a few words: "The imagination is the most scientific of the faculties, because it alone understands the universal analogy." This poet was not unaware that the savant is the poet, and it is not the fault of the savant or the fault of the poet if we ourselves begin to become conscious of it. The savant scorns the poet, the poet fears and respects the savant, both with their eyes closed. The former is not far from viewing the mystery as an ensemble of phenomena reducible to mathematical

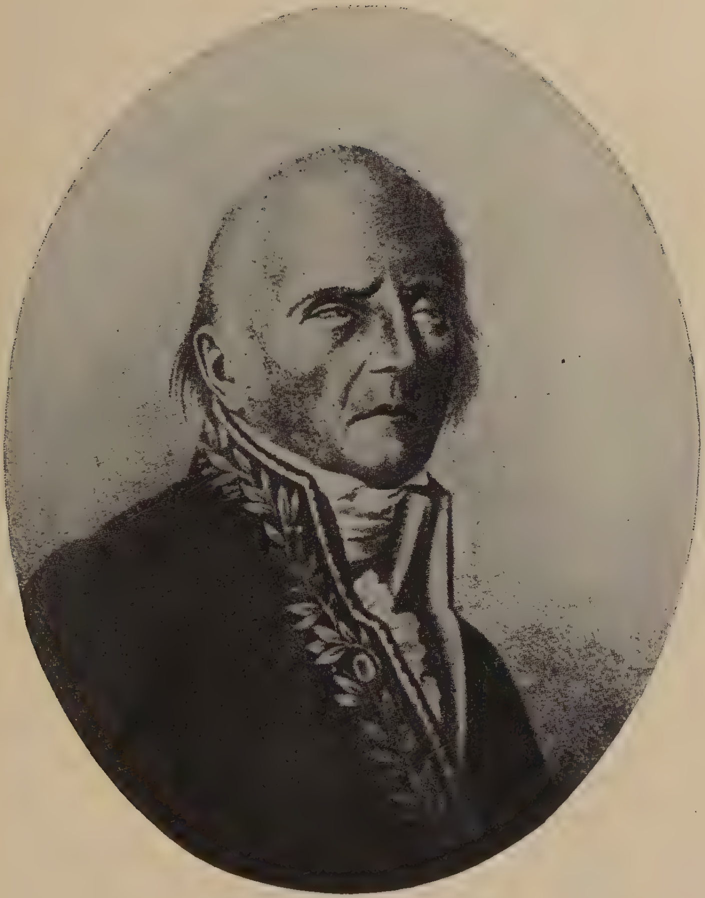

FIG. 107

THE DEMIURGE (Lamarck)

relations, which is true perhaps but proves that he does not feel this mystery. And the other, if he believed this would cease to feel it. I speak of the poet as one would of a bird that has alighted somewhere along the road, or in the fields, or in the town waiting, like an Æolian harp, for a breath from the sky—the singers of England, for instance, or Verlaine among ourselves.

For the metaphysical torment is not always in the heart of those who desire passionately to catch the scattered harmony. To know the despair caused by the idea that a geometrician alone can attain a limitless absolute, to dominate this despair when as one sees that this absolute is within the reach of a student of special mathematics, one must be a Michael Angelo, a Shakespeare, a Pascal, a Beethoven, a Goethe, or, precisely, Baudelaire. Even Pascal did not feel life sufficiently to conquer the obstinate anguish to which he was condemned by the need of assigning to life an uncompromising moral finality, and thus rejoin Baudelaire on the summits of the imaginary world where plastic art, music, and poetry tend to associate themselves with mathematics in the intoxication of an objectless harmony.

I say "tend," for geometry, to my mind, can be "pure poetry" only on condition that, outside the poet, it ceases to exist as an implement—Pascal would say as a "métier." It does not attain to the dignity of the poetic state except in very rare creators and as an intuitive instrument of harmonies that are always being born. It was rigorously applied geometrical formulas that brought Arabic decoration and, in consequence, architecture to their death.[1] They lead us directly to an automatism that is more severe than that of the workman sinking a rivet every three seconds into a plate of cast iron that passes mechanically before him.

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[1] Fig. 114.

At school we have all known various puppet-students who did their mathematics with machine-like accuracy, and we are not unaware of what they have become after their taking the required courses, in a state college.

The drama of art unrolls—for the poet within, for the geometricians without—the scope of geometry properly so-called, even though the drama may tend unceasingly to an extreme-limit of idea, the conquest of which would drown it in the Nirvana of its silent axiom. . . . If we went down to the deepest roots of our spiritual impulses we should see that neither geometry, nor analysis, nor calculus dealing with the infinitesimal, which gives us so perfect an impression of security, would exist without Euclid or Descartes or Newton. Has not Kepler told us how certain of the most commonplace circumstances of his life permitted him to foretell and, in the end, formulate several of the laws that laid the foundation of astronomy? We are doubtless not yet ready to discover in the personal work of the great geometrician those events of his inner life that must have led him to geometrical invention. But I defy any intelligence that is in love with the language of the geometricians not to dedicate to Euclid, Descartes, Newton, Kepler a passionate gratitude. In order to express themselves they imagined material signs and suggested images in which the music of the spheres, the cadences and the volumes of space assumed a physiognomy which they had not possessed before.[1]

I have said elsewhere[2] that the mathematical harmonies are not more independent of the moral terrain whence they spring than are the sensuous constructions of the painters and the musicians. Einstein could not have been born in the age of Descartes, nor Descartes in our days. A mute tragedy presides over the elaboration of the most impartially established algebraic formulas, and this tragedy is not the same in every man, in every species, nor under the pressure of the events and circumstances of every epoch or environment. The pure geometrical verity, immutable and transmissible, is no other than the residue of a few great passions.

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[1] Has not four-dimensional geometry given to the thought of Riemann and Lobatchewski a *visible* form, very different from that which clothes the thought of Euclid, and does not the cosmic relativism of the thought of Einstein obey a rhythm that is very different from the Newtonian rhythm?

[2] *History of Art*, Vol. IV, page x.

Baudelaire wrote some extraordinary lines that resolve the conflict by going back to its sources, about the same time that Claude Bernard published his *Introduction*. For three centuries an obstinate prejudice obsessed and dominated the European spirit, gradually modifying it and, in my opinion, betraying it. Organized by Cartesianism, tending to an increasing tyranny by its positive conquests, it appeared as an unconquerable adversary of a good half of the human soul, determined to destroy it—I mean an enemy of its faculty of feeling, imagining, and creating poetic forms.

M. Le Dantec has written on this subject some very sad things—or joyous, at least for those who do not think as he does. But with that unconscious irony which God[1] imposes on us, to revenge himself upon those who strive to destroy his unity, after having decreed that art is at the antipodes of science and that the latter intends to exterminate the former, he gave a definition of "science" to which art accommodates itself marvelously: "What we call 'things' are the elements of the *human* description of the world, and these elements depend, not only on the nature of the world, but also on the nature of him who describes it." Had M. Le Dantec inadvertently read Spinoza?

The efforts that have been made to render the partition water-tight have convinced so many people that one wonders if this is not one of those phenomena of collective intellectual indolence created by the mystical craving for certain immediate and urgent gains. That art and science translate, in the superficial regions of the spirit, two orders of different activity is so evident a fact that no demonstration is necessary. But I could not conceive that these activities should end in creating two intellectual structures that can never agree. One cannot define science by reducing it to mathematical relations, since geology, anatomy, botany, biology—sciences nevertheless—are irreducible to these relations, and since music—although an art—and probably painting as well, submit to mathematics in the end. As for the other argument of weight, which bases the so-called antagonism on the personal character of art and the impersonal character of science, it drives Claude Bernard into a flagrant contradiction, since he affirms, in the same illustrious *Introduction*, that science varies and art does not vary, for the impersonal tends to the law, which strives to be invariable, and the personal to opinion, which varies unceasingly.

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[1] Or, if you prefer, the universal dynamism.

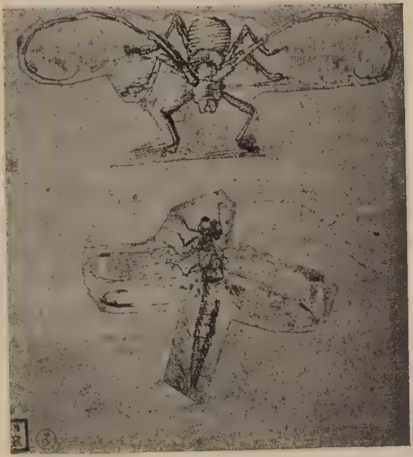

Fig. 108
Anatomy (da Vinci)

That which is impersonal is not the spirit of science, since it is the creation of man—and even, in the last analysis, of a few great personalities; it is its language. This character conditions science and assures its transmission. But we perhaps mistake for "science" a *state* of science that would destroy its achievements if both persisted in confusing their aims. The present impersonality of scientific language is perhaps only a step toward surmounting the mass of the unknown,—one achieved by the determined needs of intellectual curiosity. And it has been necessary to limit these needs on all sides, to specialize and define them in order to assure their efficacy. Mathematics, for example,—which today is doubtfully regarded as a science and which is probably only a precise way of speaking, or rather of dreaming,—mathematics two centuries ago automatically adopted toward the natural sciences an attitude that is almost similar to that which science assumes today in regard to art. Which does not prevent us from supposing that art will succeed one day in conquering some impersonal instrument in the presence of which the personality of the sculptor or the painter will preserve the same importance as does the personality of the scientist armed with the algebraic symbol, the scales, the microscope, and the crucible. The cinematograph already offers the example of a dawning art, in which the mechanical means reveal neverthe-

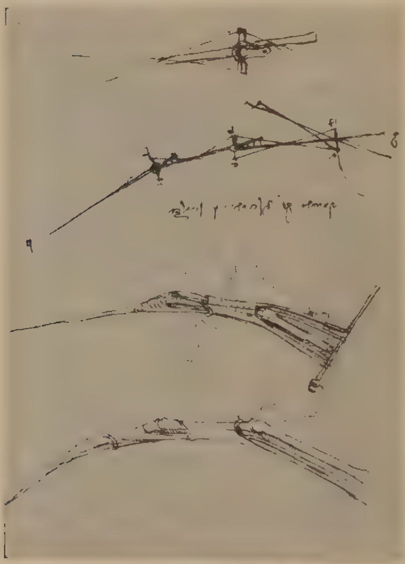

Fig. 109

Flight of Birds (da Vinci)

less—and with an extraordinary accent—the personality of the stage manager and the actor.

The most rigorous partisan of the impersonality of science really knows no more than I—and probably less than François Villon—about the end which is sought by our universal exploration of the world. It is perhaps nothing but curiosity about the useful, a means of adaptation, or even a game gradually incorporating its discoveries and its intoxicated creations in an incessant becoming—in any case a passion common to the artist and the scientist. Science no more than art—less than art, I imagine—attains "the thing in itself." It establishes the relations between "things." The faculty of first reflecting and then of generalizing is all that shapes the depths of our intellectual action, whatever may be elsewhere the elements of its enquiry and its modes of expression. Science, like art, is only a system of self deception, that is to say, of conquest.

It is in a domain superior to that of literal and transmissible science that art and science show a constantly renewed accord. At different points where science, having reached the limits of its proofs, finds itself on the verge of the unknown that withdraws before it, art appears to grasp the new intuitions upon which other proof will be founded. The great scientific hypotheses, gravitation, transmutation, atomism, so fruitful from the point of view of results, so apt to arouse creative experience and attract other hypotheses, are no more demonstrable through experimentation than art. They belong to the poetic order, like the transcendent mathematics that has nothing to do with experience and moves freely entirely outside the domain of facts. Now, what is poetry if not the intuition of the possible? How can one say that Newton is so remote from Rembrandt, if one sees clearly the abyss that separates Newton from his astronomer-pupils who have not been able to handle as subtly as himself his impersonal method, or separates Rembrandt from his painter-pupils who imitate him exactly without ever penetrating his personal virtue? Can one imagine, on the other hand, a poet destitute of the implement of knowledge, of that blood-relationship which unites him to the object of his desire, makes him, so to speak, savor with his finger the special quality of the stone and clay, touch with his eye the passages from light to shadow, arrange with his delighted intelligence the sounds and noises that reach him confusedly?

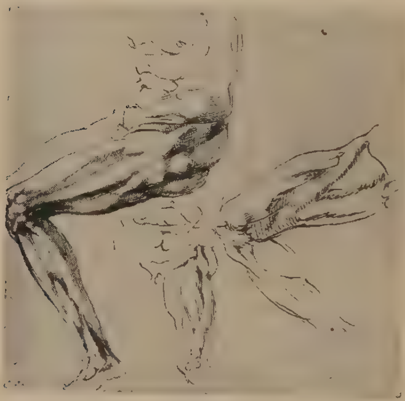

Fig. 110
Anatomy (Michael Angelo)

There is in the poet as much rigorous knowledge as there is in the scientist himself, but he only formulates it tacitly, giving sudden shape to the lightning-like hypothesis that is born of its slow assimilation; he makes use of the object to prove his hypothesis. There is, in the scientist, as much synthetic intuition as there is in the poet: he starts from the hypothesis in order to define the object. Lamarck,[1] enlightened by the analogy which he established between universal forms, affirms their original unity and delegates to Geoffroy Saint-Hillaire, to Darwin, to Huxley, to Spencer, to Haeckel, to Cope, to Samuel Butler, to Bergson, to the interminable future, the task of pursuing the proof from form to form, from the protozoan to the spirit. Rubens seized upon these forms, scattered everywhere, and summed up the universal analogy in a space that could be caught at a glance. Newton pursued the musical curves of his intellectual architecture to the confines of the invisible universe itself where he based them unshakably on the material bodies of the stars and the real orbits which they trace in the sky. Sebastian Bach brought them back to the dimensions and the scope of an orchestra that inscribes them on the heart. Aside from men of this stature, who are not very numerous, aside from the instinct of certain illustrious peoples who have given to the rocks and built on the desert the form of their illusion, I see everywhere materials loyally united by the grinder of colors and the biologist, by the lute-maker and the geometrician, by the chemist and the mason. Michael Angelo is much more of a savant, Laplace a very different sort of poet from this very erudite or very sensitive professor of this faculty of sciences or that School of the Fine Arts. Intuition has its certitudes which proof does not know.

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[1] Fig. 107.

II

The Italians of the fourteenth, the fifteenth, even of the sixteenth century, although they were more responsible than any other European people for the rupture of the spiritual unity of the Middle Ages, felt the danger of the adventure in which they made use of an intelligence determined to separate science from art in order to forge the weapon necessary to the European spirit. Aside from a few Platonists who were careless of disturbing the framework of practical knowledge and whom da Vinci could not endure, it was a strained, desperate, constant effort to maintain the conquests of intuition in a setting of the strictest technique and the most exact science, to prevent a momentarily inevitable divorce and to reconstitute in reason the lost unity of faith. An almost universal tendency manifested itself in them to transform into experimental and transmissible knowledge not only architecture but sculpture, the fresco, and even the painting of easel-pictures.

We know, moreover, that Uccello, Brunelleschi, L. B. Alberti, Verrocchio, and Piero della Francesca passed their time solving the problems of perspective[1] and attempting to apply the solutions to the rigorous composition of their buildings or their pictures. We know they wrote treatises on perspective, arithmetic, geometry, mechanics, geodesy, at the same time as treatises on architecture and painting in which they obstinately pursued the concentration of the means of knowledge in the same systematic and rational view that could unite them to all the forms of expression. We know that da Vinci, Signorelli, Michael Angelo,[2] Cellini were anatomists, passionately interested in dissecting corpses and drawing from nature muscles, bones, viscera, systems of arteries, and nerves. That da Vinci, who wrote a work on human anatomy, another on the anatomy of horses, pursued the study of the universal analogy on the nerves of leaves, the membranes of insects, the spread wings of bats and birds.[3] That this same da Vinci considered painting only as one of the processes of demonstration and of technique which permitted him to dig canals, establish locks, construct machines, and cast metal.

And we know, again, that plastic art is naturally oriented by a scientific conception of its mission since it springs from the great unknown fountain-head of the Middle Ages, where the painter and the sculptor rub elbows with the glassmaker, plumber, carpenter, and mason men who construct their own molds and their braces, cut their own marble, granite, and sandstone, and prepare their own mortar and plaster for their frescoes. The same phenomenon appeared in Germany, especially with Dürer, who was trained in the ateliers of Nuremberg where they forged iron, hammered steel, polished glass, filed the wheelwork of clocks, and passed their springs through the rolling-mill. It appeared in France also, with Jean Cousin, Palissy, and a few others.

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[1] Fig. 110.

[2] Figs. 108, 110, 111, 112.

[3] Fig. 109.

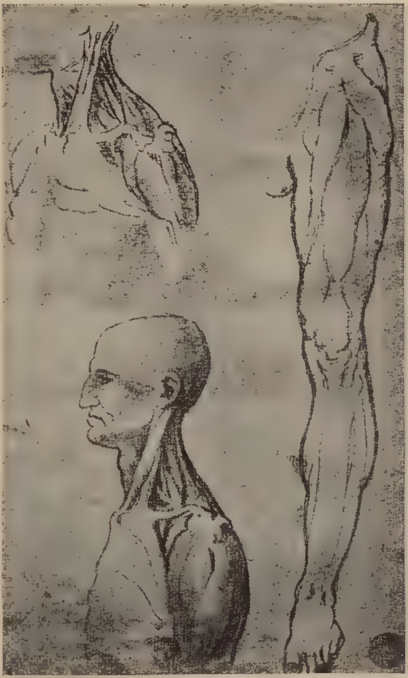

FIG. 111
ANATOMY (da Vinci)

And from this fact one grasps one of the fundamental principles of the Renaissance, especially in Florence. At the most temptestuous hour that human passion has known, art assumed an enervated, restless, even tortured character because it attempted in vain to bring the beating of the heart and the fever of the intelligence into rhythms dictated by those laws of articulate movements which were being studied on the skeleton and on the spacial order established by geometry and astronomy. The drama lived by Michael Angelo consisted wholly in this antithetical struggle between a heart, which the frontiers of the real are incapable of containing, and an absolute science that attempted to fix them. Moreover the struggle was successful, causing the realization of one of the most extraordinary of the miracles of man, but at the same time precipitating the whole of civilization, bent upon reproducing it, into an intellectual dualism still more tragic than the mystic dualism in which the Christian drama grew up.

The capital error of the Renaissance, in other ways so great, is to have believed, in its universal enchantment in discovering science, that art should be subordinated to science. On the contrary it seems to me, that science would recover all its virtue if one saw it as depending upon art, or rather, like it, as an attribute of the æsthetic genius of man seeking to introduce into the universe, by these two essential means, an incessantly pursued dynamic order. The power of the scientist will be increased tenfold on the day when he understands the real nature of the poetic intuition that leads him to conquer the world, as the power of the artist will be found complete and ten times increased on the day when his understanding has completely assimilated the elements of poetry and mystery that science has gradually incorporated. The Christian order

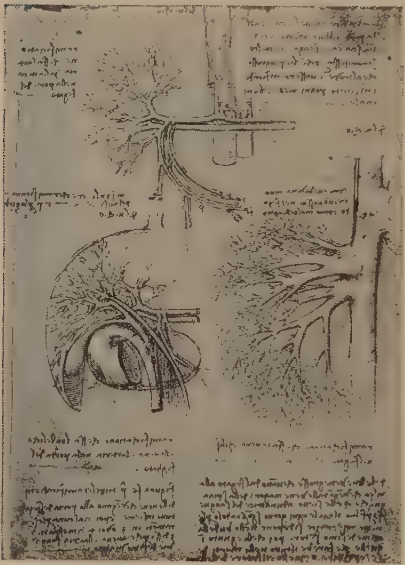

Fig. 112

Anatomical Drawings (da Vinci)

at its peak—say toward the twelfth century—knew this fundamental unity, since science, infinitely more advanced in the Middle Ages than one thinks, but using other methods than those of today, was entirely wrapped up in the cathedral, at once rationalistic and living, in which it was united to art through sculpture and stained glass and so became, like art, an image and means of universal symbolism.

It is certain that the alternate rhythms of synthesis and analysis which appear in history as soon as one seeks its pulsations under the outer surface of events, are in great part nourished by the association or dissociation of attitudes of mind that we have tried for three centuries to separate from one another and which seem today to be once more coming into accord. In all Egyptian art the monumental expression is merged with the utilitarian and this assigns to the Pyramids,[1] for example, a rôle of triangulation. The industrial and agricultural encyclopædia is written in the thousand low reliefs, all quivering with beating wings, opening flowers, budding breasts, while hieroglyphics incorporate the mystery of articulate thought in an animal or vegetable form that is as close as possible to geometrical stylization. In all probability it is the geometrician and the engineer who build the temple. In all probability in Chaldea the priest-astronomer is also the builder. Chinese meteorology regulates the symbolism of all buildings. Greek art, up to Phidias, is inspired by a naturalistic mythology and rests upon a utilitarian philosophy to which it owes its unity, which it loses with the philosophy of Socrates, the point of departure from which the poet Plato and the savant Aristotle go their different ways. In India, Pantheism reconciles the hermetical science of the

[1] Fig. 113.

initiates and the feverish art of the multitudes in the intuitive knowledge of universal relations.[1]

In the great moments of art science is completely dominated and drawn by it into the triumphal movement of a force of creation that absorbs it for the good of the universal lyric order. Whether this order dwells under the brow of Apollo, in the heart of Jesus, in the blood of Brahma, or under the breast of Isis, it is always this order that expresses the unity of divine knowledge of which science and art are attributes. When art declines under the blows of criticism or under the weight of fatigue, science, assuming the upper hand, drags to its ruin the previously imagined social poem. Thus, unfortunately for all Mussulman art, the arabesque of Islam tends gradually to enter and finally succeeds in entering the geometrical form with which it plays

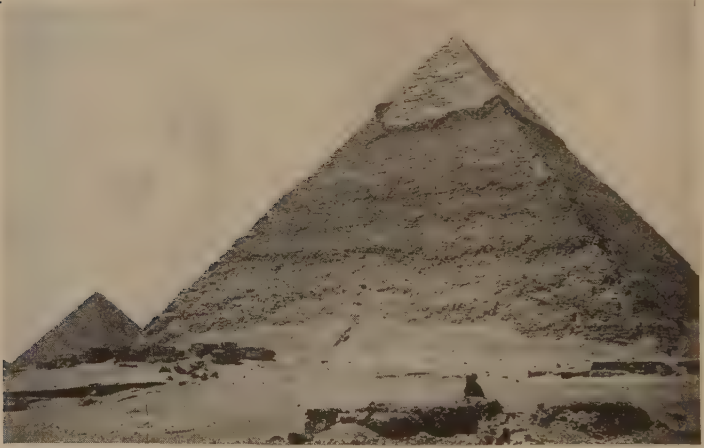

FIG. 113
PYRAMIDS

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[1] Do not the contemporary works of the Hindu scientist, Jagadis Chundra Bose, tend to demonstrate the biological unity of animal, plant, and mineral?

henceforth endlessly until its force is rendered sterile.[1] We have seen that this was precisely the influence of the disciples of Socrates in regard to the Greek edifice. We have seen that, in spite of the effort of the Italians, it was the influence of their universalists, incapable of uniting enthusiasm and method anywhere except in a few brains, that precipitated the ruin of the temple even while trying to prevent it. The Renaissance, thanks to the too wearing restraint of Cartesianism in France, was to lead the two poles of European genius toward a progressive discord which the Revolution would appear to render irremediable by destroying the corporations that maintained, at least among the artisans, the union of impersonal technique and individual lyricism. In the nineteenth century the divorce was consummated, art sinking from day to day, in spite of the heroism of a few, into sentimental preaching, and science, in spite of its incessant and most beautiful conquests, into the most degrading positivism.

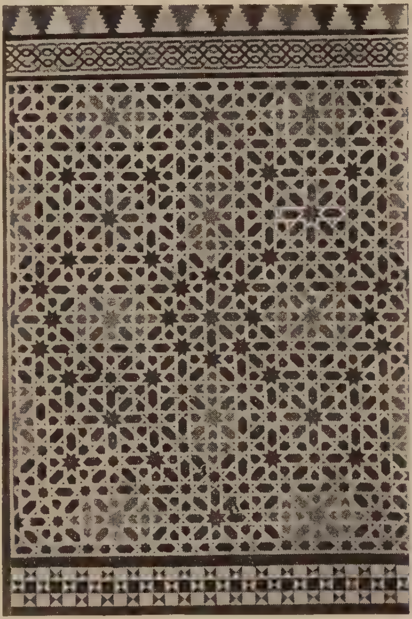

Fig. 114

Geometrical Arabesque (Alcazar)

Happily a dynamic conception of the world was born, unperceived, in the very heart of the movement that attempted, in the sixteenth century, especially in Florence, to shut up all art in the narrow frames of a static science in process of formation. It tended to subordinate this science, victorious in appearance, to the conquest of a lyricism that was indifferent to all immediately useful ends and that was being inaugurated by a few minds. Feeling instinctively the lost Christian unity, Venice introduced into the rigid armature of primitive Italian art a new circulation of spiritual forces which great painting was to organize through Rubens, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Watteau, entrusting its completion to German music.

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[1] Fig. 114.

It is no mere chance that the greatest works of Beethoven and the *Philosophie Zoologique* of Lamarck are contemporaneous. The meeting of the symphonic poem, organized by painters and rendered more perceptible to the multitudes by the musicians, with the biological poem that continues to develop in our days, marks probably the decisive moment after the ancient framework had been decisively broken by the fall of the corporations, when a nucleus of force appeared, capable of drawing back to its center of attraction science and art that had been separated from one another by criticism. And then also appeared the method that was to reunite the materials after the collapse of the Christian edifice. Everything from this day is passage, becoming a progressive harmony of contradictory forces. Form, which up to then scientists had thought they could delimit and describe in all its aspects and for all time, became—as poets knew, as they have always known—a momentary and fugitive expression of an inner, unstable, and yet continuous movement. Biology and mathematics meet one another in this concept, in which the dance, painting, and music have preceded them, and from which spiritual unity is undoubtedly destined to spring.

III

Thus in spite of the appearance, after Phidias, of Greek criticism which opened the enquiry necessary for changing the rhythm of our march, in spite of the Renaissance which pursued a similar end, we have never ceased to be surrounded by a confused universe in which the divine begins at the limits of knowledge. Art, science, philosophy, the social order, all are poetry at the outset. Everything becomes poetry again as soon as knowledge, after having saturated the mind, is obliged to appeal once more to the synthetic intuition to break the rigid circle that every system is fated to create when it exhausts its virtue. Experience, almost always if not always, has confirmed the great lyric synthesis of which it has been able to rend only the veil, woven of symbols. It burns the charcoal, it does not touch the diamond. But it is true that in burning the charcoal it leaves a residue of cinders so rich in nourishing substances that it adds, at every cycle, new fires to the flame of the diamond. Greek analysis, in ruining the ancient myths, has thus precipitated in

Fig. 115

Motor

the Jewish focus, innumerable facts, sentiments, forms that have permitted the Christian myth to flourish. Occidental analysis, in ruining the Christian myth, has accumulated in us such unemployed forces that we can foresee their approaching organization on some mystical plane under pain of being destroyed by them if we refuse to utilize them.

In fact, the belief that modern science brings moral progress or is even the same thing, has nearly ruined man's confidence in it and led him to break the new idol that failed to crown his hope. The optimism that is born in the sentimental reaction of the weak against the cruelty of social realities always represents a serious danger to the effort of civilization—I mean the effort to organize the illusions, the symbols, and the images and not that which desires to moralize every force of man at the risk of neutralizing him. On the other hand, it is curious to find that the critical spirit had reached the point, in our time, of confusing the fact of its growth with what is called "civilization"—which means, to almost all men, the impulse to apply science—when at all times, on the contrary, it has appeared at the decline of successive civilizations which it has contributed more than any other force in the world to destroy.

The notion of progress, vulgarized by science and confused with the evident development of the general well-being, has spread the idea that it is at last going to bring the reality of happiness, as if happiness could be anything else than a state of unstable equilibrium, as if the first effect of science had not always been to destroy this equilibrium and illuminate cruelly the inmost recesses of our illusions! At the stroke of its wand, has not science suppressed the inner analysis, the drama of love and the consciousness of death, which on the contrary it has deepened by multiplying the means of exchange and the terms of comparison? It is remarkable to find that the cruel myths of India, Syria, Judæa, or Greece have not sown more despair in the world than the consoling myths of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, or the humanitarian religion of today, of which science constitutes the central myth. The pitiless development of science,[1] that universal mechanization, fated as the course of a star and which man could not stop if he wished to do so, exceeds perhaps in ferocity the most sanguinary mystic symbols of Phœnicia or Mexico, not only because of the beings whom it destroys in industry or war, but especially because of its geometrical progression, which drags people's minds into a whirlpool of ever-increasing swiftness. Every change of idol is expressed by murder and suffering, and quite as much in individual consciences as in social realities.

The idea of progress is always fatal to art, and to it Hellenic and Renaissance

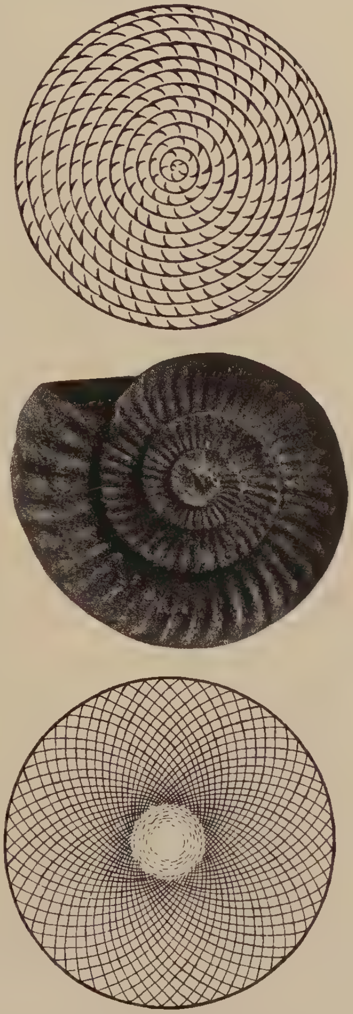

Fig. 116

Stereodynamics of Life

1. Nummulite (Spiral of Archimedes)
2. Fossil Ammonite
3. Orbitoid (Logarithmic Spirals)

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[1] Fig. 115.

art notably owed their rapid decadence for having confused the idea of expression with the idea of perfection. It can be maintained in the field of science only on condition that while it labors to develop mechanical systems, it also develops the will to establish over this mechanism the domination of man. Until now he has been merely its victim. On the day when he holds this new weapon firmly in his hand he must make the most terrible effort that God has demanded of him. If thereby he can regain the equilibrium which was broken by the too sudden invasion of applied science, he will be able to plan, not the resumption of his way toward an indefinite progress, but the realizing through his intelligence of a new form in which art will once more attain its rights. It is increasingly apparent that science, without modifying the depths of man, is engaged on a thoroughgoing renewal of the bases of his illusion.

The Italians certainly felt this. Their art would have amounted to nothing if their learning as geometricians, anatomists, technicians had not offered them the occasion for a new enthusiasm, much more than a precise end which they had cold-bloodedly set out to attain. Without a passionate love for geometry would Piero della Francesca have discovered in the human structure those monumental forms, those spherical skulls, those pure and solid faces, those torsos, those column-like limbs, all that formidable majesty that makes one think of a race of gods descended in prayer and struggle? And would Uccello have achieved those harsh rhythms that resound not merely in vigorous movement and the mass of groups in action, but in somber harmonies of black and red that reveal the rectitude and the force of calculus?[1] If da Vinci had not applied an ardent curiosity to the study of the muscles overlying the bones, of the arborescences on insect wings and leaves, of the networks of veins under the skin, would his drawings quiver with that animation, at once distinct and mysterious, which causes the living surfaces to vibrate as if under the continuous caress of the influx of the nerves and blood?[1] Michael Angelo is haunted to such a degree by his own learning that he comes to hate it, like a too tyrannical love which by turns exalts a hundredfold or annihilates our power of action.

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[1] Figs. 141, 142.

We must not forget that in the sixteenth century the sciences were still mysterious and inexact. They formed part of the divine domain of the always renewable unknown, they had not yet assumed that fixed position from which their rising dynamism has torn them during the past few years, and the persistence of which would have risked destroying the hypothesis as much in the hearts of the poets as in the brains of the scientists. It is in this dynamism itself, and not in the daily increasing applications of science that we must seek its incomparable poetry, in which art can acquire renewed strength.

Never more than today has the contact of the spirit with reality, patiently and methodically scrutinized, forced upon us the impression of this infinite and undefined enlargement of the mystery that gives our lyric force its eternal freshness. At the same time that industrial mechanics and architecture are laboring to restore to the intelligence of artists a logical skeleton that articulates it in all its parts, the thousand new relations that science creates, the thousand old relations which it destroys, confront the spirit with an unexpected and profoundly moving universe. The immense poetry of transformism, after having revealed to us the original identity of the organisms scattered over the earth and in the waters, has made out of time the spiritual architect of space itself, though this is no doubt only one of its incarnations.

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[1] Figs. 108, 109, 111, 112.

A metaphysics—I should say a mythology—in process of constant formation teaches us that the spacial illusion enters, with all its implications, into an incessantly creative development in which rigorous scientific instruments—the cinematograph, for instance—project the moving image under aspects that mingle like musical rhythms. The opacity of forms disappears, revealing beyond the hardest surfaces and the densest volumes that one had thought were defined for all time, forms

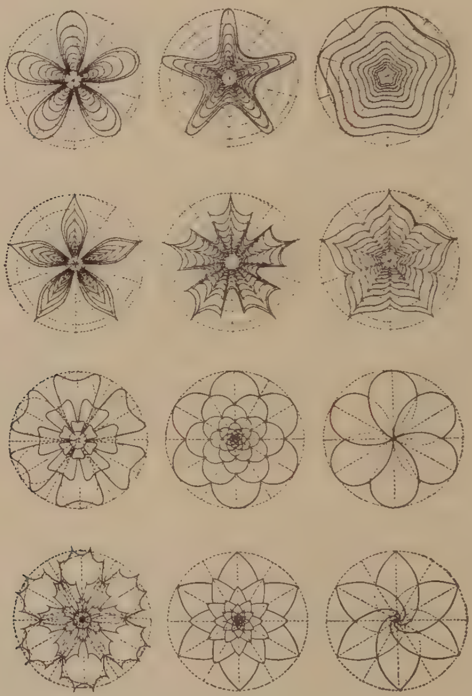

Fig. 117

Stereodynamics of Flower Forms

that sink deeper and deeper into the secret of a life that is in process of elaboration. Distance no longer exists, since the thought and the word are transmitted instantaneously from any point whatever of space to all its other points. Objective psychology reveals moral labyrinths that were formerly covered or rather masked by morality. We are beginning to grow intoxicated with the idea that the infinitely small, obedient to gravitation, opens up within us, through the dance of the atoms, the same mechanical abyss in which the vortex of the stars surpasses in extent and complexity the limits of intuition.[1] Never perhaps has such a mass of poetic material appealed to our enthusiasm.

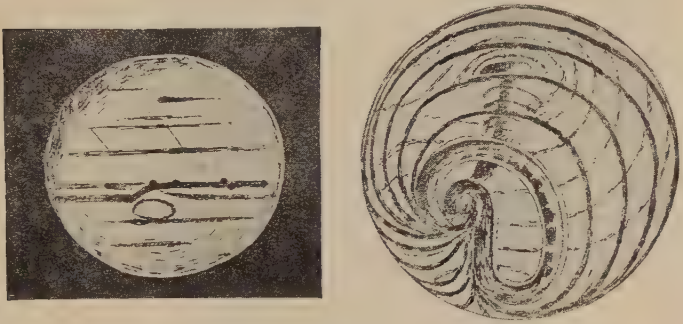

FIG. 118

ANALOGIES (Whorls: 1. Jupiter. 2. A Drop of Water)

And, in the last analysis, a similar impression, I think, derives periodically from the meeting of two elements: our candid but invincible need of "progress" and our imperious feeling that art and science, springing from the same source, going toward the same destiny, accord, at their great moments, in a unity so close that one could not destroy one without destroying the other at the same time. If, as I believe, the universal order is not moral but æsthetic in essence, it seems that the only progress that can be realized in it is the continually growing power of the spirit to rediscover the virgin sources of its natural emotions, to break through the deposit of sentiments, ideas, and sensations left by generations and centuries, and to give to these natural emotions the form of a new organism. The effort which this exploration demands seems more and more painful, no doubt, but as the inner nature of man grows more and more complex it is possible that this effort will weigh upon him less in the future than that of creating fire, for example, or than the making of the first flint hatchet weighed upon his ancestor. In any case, it is in this effort that his grandeur lies. If the world exists for a thousand million years more, it will still be the poet, after these thousand million years, who, on the image that he shaped of himself, will impose the order established among the spiritual materials accumulated by the knowledge that had existed before him

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[1] Figs. 116, 117, 118.

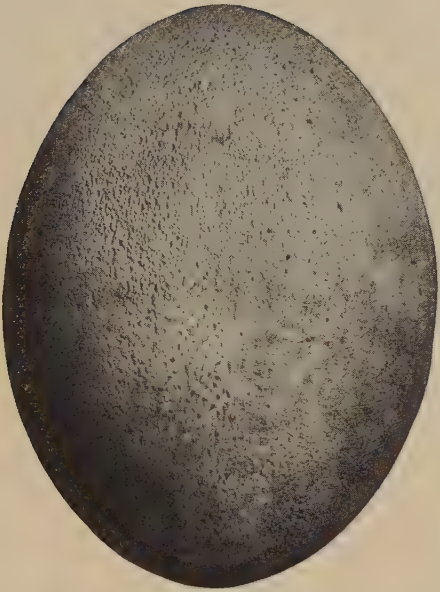

Fig. 118a

Egg of Epiornis

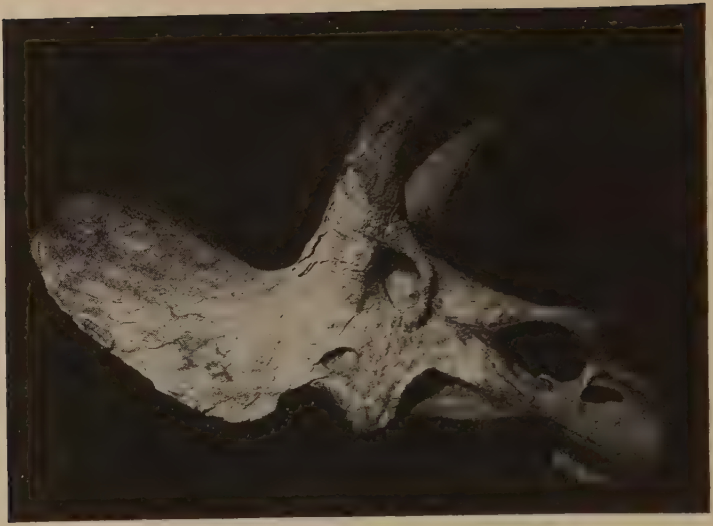

FIG. 119
TRICERATOPS

Chapter VI. THE KEYBOARD

I

THUS, far from shrinking, the keyboard incessantly grows larger. The more the complexity of the spirit increases, the more the elements of its creations accumulate. For its own safety it will not escape them. It will never be suspended in the void. It feeds on solid things as a fire feeds on oil or on wood. And the poet has charge of providing it with this food. History, religion, civilization, the conquest of the universe by man, his pathetic creation of God, all this is nothing but poetry—that is to say, the incorporation in the spirit of the matter that creates it and which it recreates itself and transfigures in a continuous exchange. Nothing is conceivable for man without some material support. Nothing can reach him without the aid of matter. Not visible matter alone, to be sure, but tangible matter, sounds, words, the mathematical symbol, the idea that cannot be grasped or formulated without them. The Jewish Bible, the loftiest that I know, believed it could escape the law, conquer the material idol, do without it. Childish error! It is an idol itself, through its sonority, through the images it evokes, through its power over the lightning which it can cause either to hold back or to strike, through its faculty of making springs rise in the sand, of engulfing cities under the waters. The spirit is nothing but the relations between solid elements, the organization of these solid elements into a continuous harmony of which love is the motive and intelligence is the means.

There is a constant interchange between the material of the world, which we immediately transform into spirit the moment it touches us, and the spirit that we immediately represent as matter the moment we are touched by it. No ethical religion escapes this consoling law. Not the Jewish, as we have seen. Not the Christian, built on the double, unshakable base of the evangelical poem and of Greek logic, forged by the geometricians and upholding the Catholic edifice, visible even in the fruits, the vegetables, the animals, and plows that have been caught in the glowing stone. Not Buddhism, so widely spread over Asia by a flood of granite that ferments and swarms with images whose very odors it has caught. Not even Islam, the purest of all, the spirit of which soars with the vaults of the mosques, forms a silent counterpoint with the play of the arabesques, fuses souls with the upward flight of the minarets whence it falls again into men's hearts with the rhythmic psalmody of the prayers. The apparent duality of matter and spirit never strikes us, and never even reveals their cruel antagonism save in the alternately intoxicating and tragic feeling of a fundamental unity in which their sources, their mediums, their appearances are reunited. All attempts to emerge from this unity have only led the intelligence back to it by indirect roads. Asceticism, the most implacable form of the pretensions of the spirit, ruins the body in order to demonstrate the utter indissolubility of an essence which debauchery, the most implacable form of the pretensions of matter, finds by methods that appear to be diametrically opposed.

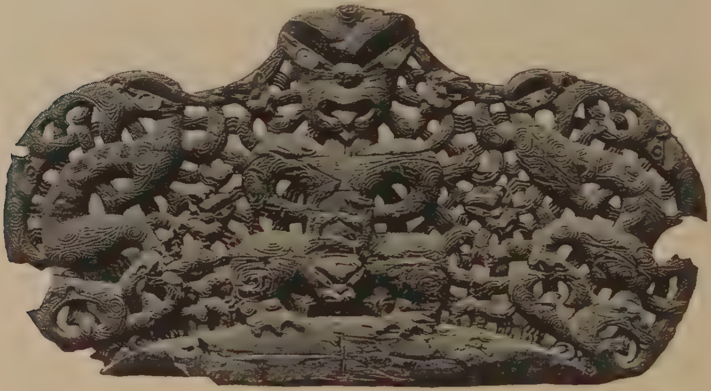

Fig. 120
Work in Wood (Polynesia)

Man believes he imitates outward forms. He gets from them nothing but relations, analogies, measures, classifications of numbers, and values, which he can communicate only by externalizing them. His victory is at the precise but unstable point where what he calls his spirit rejoins the spirit that issues from the forms themselves in an accord which he realizes only in flashes. Mystery! For this flash to be produced, there must pass into each stroke of the sculptor's chisel the whole of his past and present life: the intoxication of his senses before the freshness of water and verdure, the thirst of his senses for blood—or their aversion to it, his anxiety in the presence of women, his bitterness at being despised and his joy at being understood, his revolt against the yoke, blinders, and the rod, his refusal or his consent that society, the country, and the world should be what they are, down to the very influence of the air he breathes and the food he digests upon his health, his waking and sleeping, his cheerful or sullen humor.

Then in the very heart of the stone there is established the identity of his spirit with the profound movements that determine the surfaces of the stone, the incidence of light and the play of shadows upon it, its grain, density, sonority, savor. It seems inconceivable, but it is natural, that a dark bronze should assume the ruddy tone of flesh, an icy and compact marble the pulpy firmness of fruit, solid granite, the fluidity of running water. It seems inconceivable but it is natural that a block of formless stone, worked over by loving hands, should become a spiritual wave, an infinite quivering of imponderable vibrations, a play of scarcely sensible nuances that spreads over its entire expanse the commandments of its mute depths, whereas this same block, worked over by mean hands, wastes the splendor of its mass in disjointed gestures, loses the living quality of its natural density and color and becomes colorless and empty, even if those hands polish it, even if they are bent upon increasing its importance. Spiritual nourishment, like material, becomes part of the man himself who imparts to the product of the exchange the qualities he receives from it.

One can only imperfectly imagine, I believe, the depths of the reverberations which the very nature of the material, its density, its hardness, the degree of resistance it opposes to the implement—that is to say to the hand, which means the intelligence—can awaken in the soul of an artist by way of the thirty or sixty or one hundred generations that have worked in it before him. Why should not wood, which is so soft and can be cut in all directions without being chipped, give to the German or the Polynesian[1] who attacks it and whose knife pierces it at the will of his sensual or sentimental impulses, a taste for the complications of winding lines, for picturesque irregularities on the surfaces, for scrolls, volutes, and rhythmic repetitions? Egyptian basalt,[2] which wears away so slowly, rocking meditation on its wave during the long hours of work—why should it not bring about a taste for great simplified planes that merge into one another without shock or sudden fracture, like a silent music of endless modulations

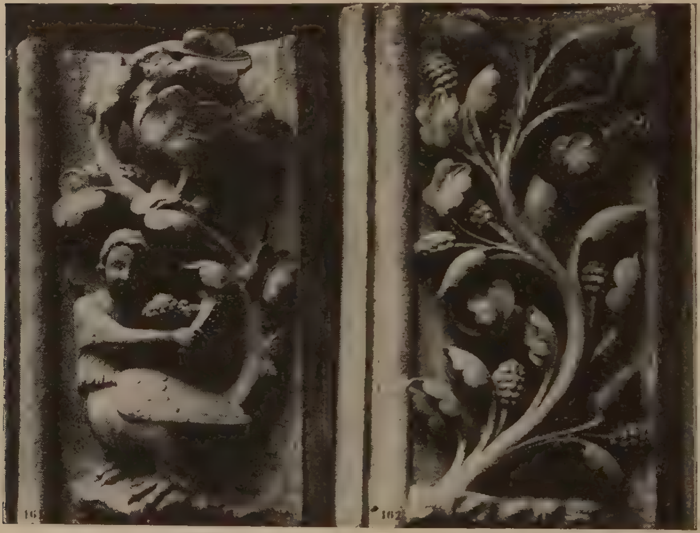

Fig. 121 Fig. 122

Work in Stone (France xiii Century)

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[1] Fig. 120.

[2] Figs. 27, 39, 197.

which no eye can interrupt? Stone, less soft than wood, less hard than primitive rock and which iron easily chips in decisive strokes that can not be altered later—how should it not indicate to the Frenchman or to the Hindu[1] the path of high relief and expressive movements, half way between immediate impulse and the great immutable systems, and so produce what is both most general and most perceptible in the drama of humanity?

It is the same everywhere, from the most utilitarian architecture, in which our permanent needs are logically formulated and expressed by bold surfaces and flowing parts, to the most personal of paintings pursuing, in the most complex play of reflections, values, and passages, the psychological tragedy which the poet sees unfolding, withdrawing, hiding, or springing up within him. It is not by chance that this Florentine, in whom gesture is the natural prolongation of an activity patiently and passionately prepared, paints with a kind of violence on the plaster of walls that dry quickly, the severe tones and vigorous contours which he never retouches later.[2] Or that this material-minded Fleming, nourished on beer and meat, seeks in the fluid and fugitive luster of oil the sensual correspondence of his rich, sonorous, abundant visions, mingled and triturated like the thick paste in which his brush revels.[3]

Or that this German, with his precise mind, juxtaposing his sensations like selected objects to confront them with the most vague and floating of reveries, bending near-sightedly over his steel plate, engraves the metal with a hundred intercrossed strokes of which he does not see directly either the color or the arabesque, and whence the shadow and the light surge up as if without his knowledge.[1] Or take this Chinese with his magnifying glass who, a thousand times, has copied all the little animals, all the grasses, all the ripples on the water; it is not by chance that he suddenly forgets the external universe and paints his own states of soul, in which everything that he knows so well appears only as so many signs to transmit to the changing silk, in harmonies as fragile as pollen, trembling like dew, crisp as snow, vanishing like the perfume of a flower, the limpidity of dawn, the hum of summer, the cruel silence of winter.[2]

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[1] Figs. 121, 122, 178.

[2] Fig. 123.

[3] Figs. 28, 32, 66, 87, 96, 140.

To every wrought material there attaches a special pleasure that corresponds to the intimate emotions of the individual and the species. The beauty of the craft blends with the lyric intoxication which increases in the measure that the form, growing clearer each moment brings meaning out of chaos. Here is a man who would remain insensible to the work of the thumb in clay, but he takes delight in casting in a mold his mixture of tin and copper. Another, who does not feel the subtle joy of mixing pure tones in order to obtain, in the undulating and glistening vehicle of oil, the imperceptible nuances that betray the confessions of the passions, will watch with delight the slow baking of the earth, as it renders the freshness proper to this leaf, the velvety depth proper to that corolla, the metallic brilliance which belongs to the corselet of this scarabæus, to the scales of that fish. No one has the right to intervene between the desire of the poet and the object of this desire, for he himself does not know from what extraordinary accumulation of obscure atavisms, fortuitous correspondences, indistinct memories, sensual fatalities, has issued the unique flash that bursts from their encounter.

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[1] Fig. 73.

[2] Fig. 41.

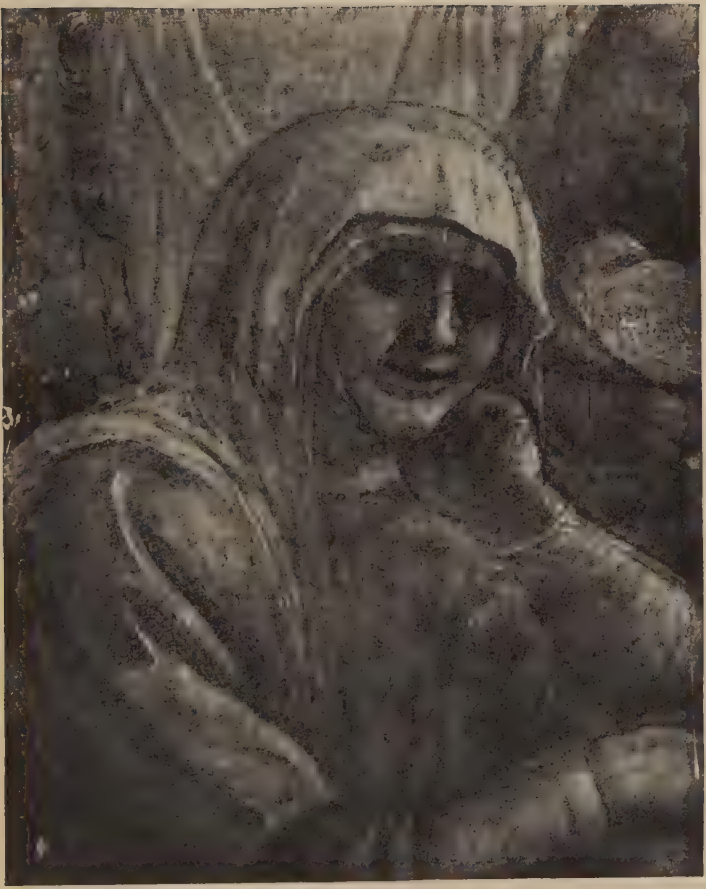

Fig. 123

Fresco Painting (Filippo Lippi)

The poem of matter saturates our flesh to such a point that, to follow its unfolding in a work of art, it would be necessary to begin with one's mother's milk, when a liquid matter models our very form, touch upon all the contacts which the education of our senses (food, clothing, lodging, play) imposes upon that form, and end with the amorous embrace which reveals, in the indefinitely prolonged exchanges of pleasure and suffering, the most subtle researches of the imagination and the spirit. Our seats and our beds are stamped by our physical appearance. Our threshold is shaped by our steps. The objects of the table and trade obey the anatomical arrangements of our mouths and our hands. It is not possible for us to escape the haunting multitude of things that force upon our notice the endless form of the world so as to turn it into spirit. The wall which we make and which introduces into our mental habits so much rectitude at the same time that it shelters us, is made of stone that is cut or brick that is baked by us. The money that we coin for the exchange of our goods and our passions assumes the aspect of our geometrical abstractions and the myths upon which our history rests. All the spiritual conquests through which we think to escape from this material flood that surrounds us and rises with us—even while we try to raise ourselves above it—are inclosed in the enormous heaps of parchment and paper stamped with ink which the font or the block has imprinted. We only capture light on condition that a metallic support consents to it. And the sonorous waves that traverse space without our perceiving them only reach us through the intermediation of antennæ, plates or shells of metal. It is a subtle and continuous education that matter exercises over our faculties of comparing, eliminating, ordering, and choosing, even, and perhaps especially, when we

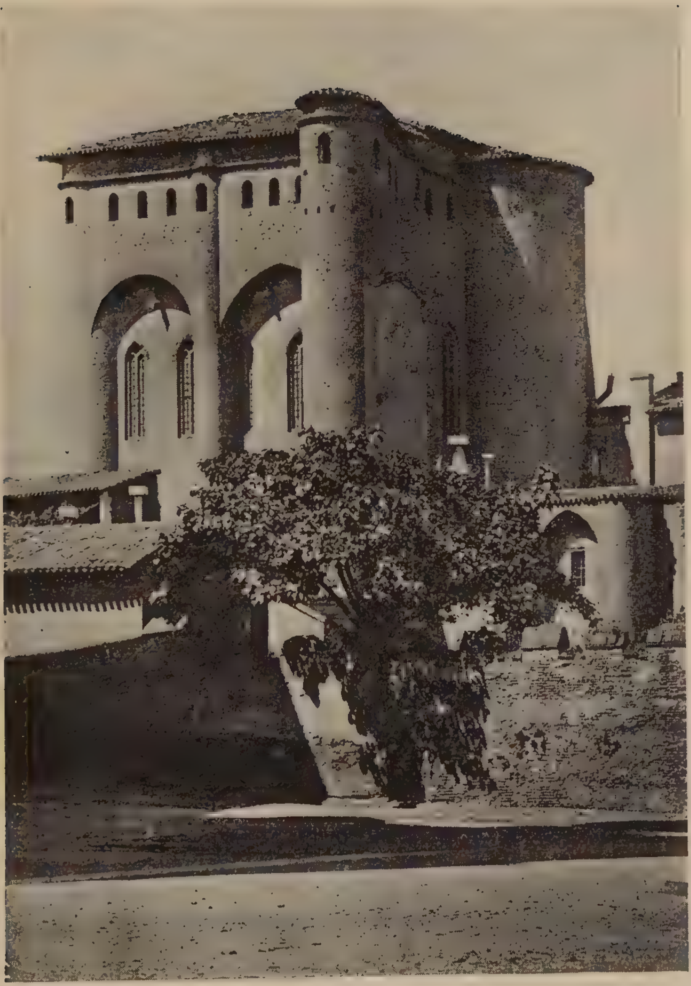

Fig. 124

Geometrical Architecture (Albi)

imagine that our spirit revels in an abstract space of which it has nevertheless determined the dimensions.

II

The plastic means through which the poet is able to know these dimensions is not contented with the geometrical symbol. It reaches our mind by making use of our senses, to be sure, since neither the absolute straight line nor the absolute circle exists in nature; the geometrical symbol is merely the schematization of the grossest sensations, those, precisely, which show us an absolute straight line on the surface of a distant expanse of water, for example, or an absolute circle in the appearance of the maritime horizon, of the moon or the sun. But the symbol does not enrich the sensual imagination, through which the relations of feeling

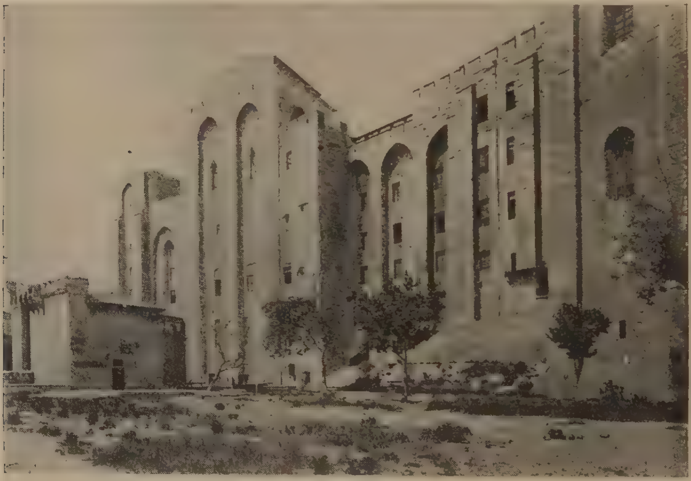

Fig. 125

Arid Surroundings, Ogives (Avignon)

between man and man are discovered; it ends by creating instruments of merely material organization in which we can find, for that matter, a thousand pretexts for intensifying and multiplying these relations. The marvelous industrial implement which it has created in our epoch is not capable of spiritually augmenting man, like poetry, painting, or music, but it creates the new circumstances and the unexpected dramas in which poetry, painting, and music can renew their nourishment.

Architecture, which approaches most closely, through its sources and appearances, the geometrical symbol, is the most universal plastic means, and the first in date, I imagine, which may have offered itself to the poet to order the universe on the plane of his emotions. Through it matter was immediately and practically utilized. Primitive man who was physically and mentally poor, got from the branches of trees or the vaults of caverns the suggestions which resulted, later on, in the invention of cross-pieces capable of completing this branch-work on the wall that would stop up the vault and keep out animals and the elements. For this very reason I do not believe that there exist, between geometry and architecture, relations as close and necessary as people have said. It is possible that at the moment when a race attains the possession of its highest equilibrium, the confused sentiment of the harmony that dwells in it coincides with approximate or even absolute mathematical symbols. These, far from lying at the origin of the harmony, express, on the contrary, its least conscious direction, mark the end it is approaching, and succeed, only by a brief miracle, in mingling with it.

But even at these moments, or especially at these moments, there is not, I think, in the rigor of the geometrical relations we discover in some monument, more of a conscious will to express these relations than exists in the rigor of the arithmetical relations that are found in music and ignored by musicians. All nature, to my thinking, is only an approximate harmony that tends to become a perfect harmony but which, happily for its own conservation, only succeeds in doing so momentarily. Mathematics itself is a creation of our mind, objectively non-existent, but made to fill the need of an absolute about which our miserable life turns for its consolation. Mathematics, in short, the creation of the intelligence, is a postulate of instinct, like musical, plastic, or even chromatic harmony, with the difference that it tends to demonstrate the postulate which harmony is satisfied to live. But simply by virtue of the fact that it is harmony, it is right. Mathematically right. Against all systems, against all methods, against science, against law, against morality, against a divinity

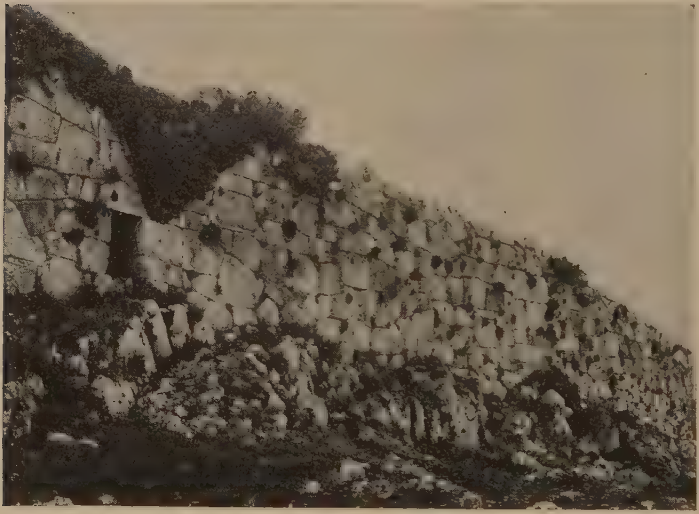

Fig. 126

Pelasgic Wall (Italy)

reduced to the rôle of a policeman. It remains for us to know whether this harmony, at the very instant when our instinct creates it, does not itself entirely transfigure the rigorous numbers to which it can be reduced, by assuring to these numbers life and movement through a mysterious and irresistible labor. I mean: it remains for us to know whether the dancer moving over the bit of earth on which he dances does not measure it more infallibly than the surveyor armed with his instruments.

Going back to the rudest sources of instinct, those that impel the negro or the Papuan to seek ornamental motifs in the circle and the line, the architect, reaching the summit of creative power, experiences, like all creators, the need of rationalizing the emotions that lead him there. But Pascal, at the moment when he takes up the pen, no longer knows geometry. Which does not prevent his most eloquent phrases from borrowing from the subterranean persistence of his geometrician's temperament that sort of solidity which one finds wherever great architecture has apparently borrowed from calculus the most exact of the harmonic laws, those that seem to preside over the apparent symmetry of the Greek temple, over the rhythmic alternation of the ogives of the Papal Palace at Avignon,[1] over the harsh monotony of the Italian civic palace,[2] over the measured proportions of the buildings of the French seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[3]

Nevertheless we know that in no Greek ground plan are the columns rigorously parallel, that Byzantine cupolas or French ogives differ slightly in dimensions, like the deviations between the summit and the base of the buttresses and the pillars that uphold them, that the rhythmic alternations borrow their illusory aspect of reality more from the play of numbers than from the symmetry of forms, and no more in the Italian palace than in the French palace are the distances between the solid parts and empty spaces exactly the same anywhere. If architectonic harmony were supported by definitely fixed laws, they would not be lost sight of so frequently and in all places. But it is only when the sentiment, at once practical and mystical, of great construction gives way that no one longer finds them. The exception of the formula to be found in the arabesque offers the single example, precisely, of the way in which rigorous calculation ends not in a saving architecture but in destroying it after having lost its principle of ornamentation.

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[1] Fig. 125.

[2] Fig. 79.

[3] Fig. 36.

In truth, architecture offers the moving spectacle of a living geometry,[1] something which can only be obtained on condition that one does not observe an absolute rigor in distance, measure, and proportions. The fact that every well-constructed building is conceived in what are approximately circles and rectangles, belongs to eternal architecture. When our geometrical instinct maintains this formula, at least roughly, it is only necessary to animate in one's own way the significant surfaces, which is the proper task of the epoch and the moment. A revolution, in whatever sphere, has no other aim than to animate the surfaces of the social body. When it takes place it is because the depths are ready. On the day when Constantine issued his edicts was not Christianity already formed in the hearts of the Occident, as was Buddhism in the hearts of the Orient when Asoka became a Buddhist? And consider the French or Russian revolution when the Third or Fourth Estate instituted its dictatorship over the whole of the social body. I find in the Parthenon, in the

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[1] Fig. 124.

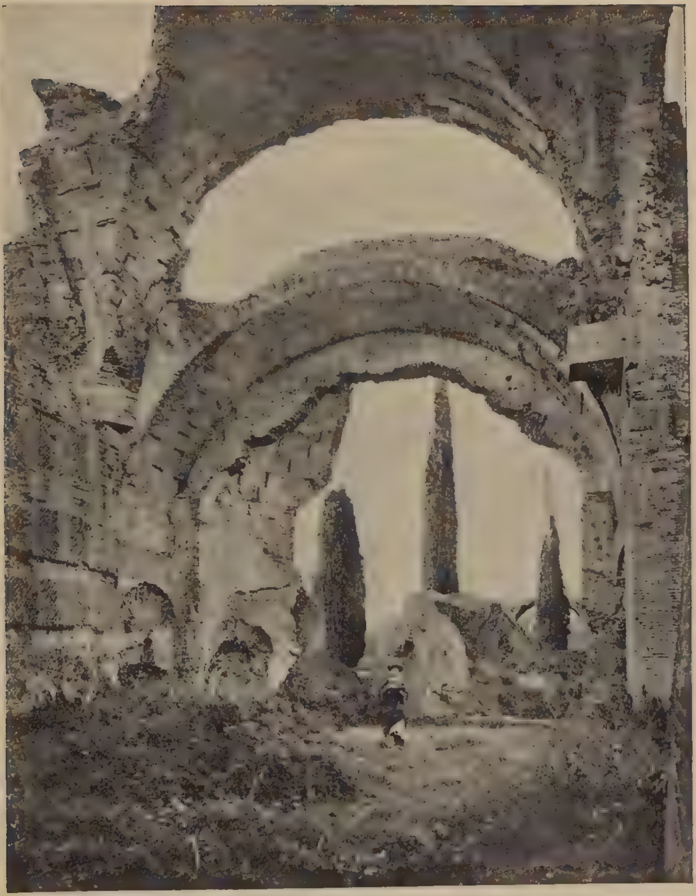

Fig. 127

Roman Wagon—Vault (Tivoli)

Mosque of Omar, in Saint Sophia, in Notre Dame, in the palace at Siena, all different or even antagonistic in appearance, an inner skeleton of a structural logic strictly similar, though responding to diverse needs, and outlines and surfaces where there play eternally, in different rhythms, the circle, the square, the ellipse, and the triangle.

Architecture marks the passage of geometry from the intellectual to the perceptible plane. To give the illusion of movement to matter disposed according to the crude appearance of the geometrical order—that is architecture! The fact that architecture seems to start with the geometrical symbol and end in a living organism, while painting, at the other pole, sets out from living emotion and tends toward the geometrical symbol, takes us no farther than the most rudimentary sense-illusions. They show once more that painting expresses the individual at grips with experience and seeking to substitute his reason for the lost social principles, while architecture expresses the multitude rationally enclosed in those social principles from which the needs of individuals seek to free themselves. One finds in plastic art all possible correspondences between these elementary tendencies and the ensemble of the social body. Even though painted, for example, the Egyptian relief is based upon architecture while the Hindu relief, even when it is not painted, tends to be painting.[1]

Even if, as I have read somewhere, everything is a matter of proportion where the Greek temple is concerned, an affair of mass in the case of the Egyptian temple, a matter of space-mastery with the ogival French temple, we know all this only from the expression, serene, imposing, or enthusiastic, which the dominant passion imposes on the face of the temple. Architecture always arises, in the intention of the architect, according to the impersonal principle it draws from the needs of the multitude; but the gigantic personality of the multitude imposes on each building a signification such that one recognizes immediately on seeing it the race, the epoch, the religion, or the drama that built it. Architecture is, from first to last, a science rather than an art, the science of materials, the science of weights and pressures, the science of the strict adaptation of an instrument to its end.

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[1] Figs. 39, 91, 97, 131, 136, 137, 177, 188, 202, 207, 216.

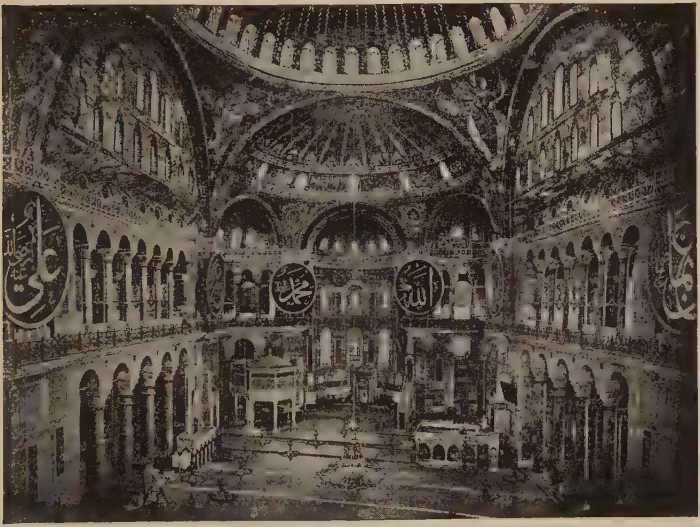

Fig. 128

Cupola on Pendentives (Saint Sophia)

The great inventions of architecture—the wall, the Egyptian column, the Assyrian vault, the Roman vault, the cupola on pendentives, the ogival transept of Occidental Europe[1] are comparable, from this point of view, with the inventions of modern industry —the boiler, the motor, the metallic framework[2] and hence structural exactness appears most necessary in these organic parts. The bridge, for example, where the vault and the wall unite, is a scientific work of the first order, and the entire formidable Roman architecture makes one think much more of the industrial constructions of today than of any plastic art of Europe or Asia at any period whatever.[1] But by a unique miracle these very organic parts, a column springing up, a cupola imprisoning space, an ogive capable of sustaining on its frail skeleton the most enormous pile, a vault paradoxically suspending tons of stone above the abyss by means of their own weight, succeed in giving us such an æsthetic emotion that after having known it we cannot tolerate any longer the least ornament upon them or about them. We demand them, therefore, in their scientific purity, like a visible, aerial music that makes us, so to speak, *see* the song of the spheres in the ether, the organ voice of giant trunks in the forest, the incessant murmur that lulls the vault of the woods. The Romans have taught us that their utilitarian constructions represent an æsthetics superior to their ideological constructions and that their aqueducts are more impressive than their temples. It is thanks to them, I firmly believe, and thanks to the example of contemporary engineers who are returning to the principles of architecture (ruined by architects) that we have come to seek in the most beautiful ideological works of the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Arabs, the Italians, or the French the structural nucleus that determines them, as the skeleton determines the form of the animal.

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[1] Figs. 126, 127, 128, 129, 180 bis.

[2] Figs. 35, 71, 115, 168, 215, 218.

And first of all we have come to eliminate ornament as if it were a parasite, no longer using it save as a servant, a means of stressing the function of such and such a lever or portion of a skeleton, that we seek first of all to discover. The entire Parthenon, for example, is contained in the earthen house supported by four posts at the corners, on which rest four horizontal posts, which still shelters the peasant in certain regions of Ionia or the Isles.[1] This will teach us to analyze the statue, perhaps even the picture and certainly the piece of furniture, which last is architecture and nothing but architecture. Seen from without, an edifice or a piece of furniture expresses its inner structure. Its façade is the projection on the vertical plane of its functional reality on the horizontal plane. The splendor of the Egyptian statue, or of peasant pottery in all countries of the world, acknowledges this origin.

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[1] Figs. 34, 127, 213.

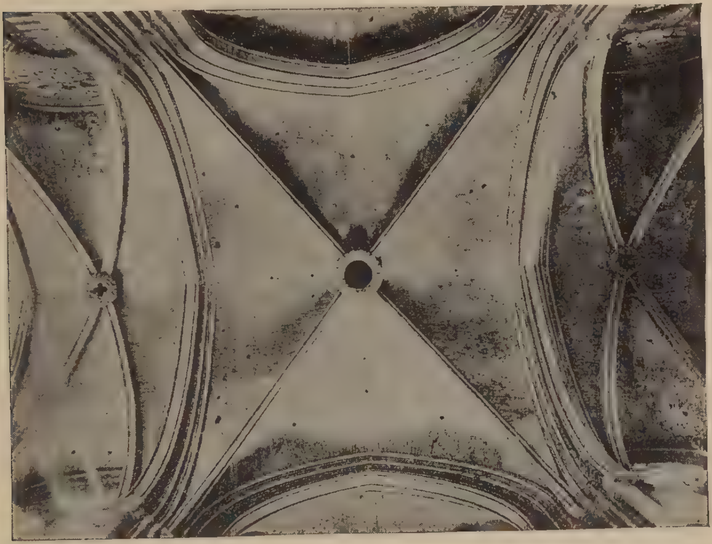

Fig. 129
Groined Ogives (Chartres)

Those, then, who do not forget the function of the building and of the skeleton that secures, articulates and sustains it, can clothe it with all the vestments possible, and pass without effort from the most severely naked Roman vault to the most heavily decorated French cathedral while recognizing in them both the same eternal principle. Everything that obeys this principle, whatever its exterior aspect may be, expresses an essential moment of the human soul, simple or complex, positive or mystical, humble or terrible, but one that consents to start with a careful knowledge of the material and of the end to be attained through it, and tends toward the most magnificent expression of the collective life of the spirit at that moment. All revolutions challenge the religious edifices because these represent most clearly the ancient ideas held in common that are opposed to the new ideas held in common.

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[1] Fig. 130.

They could equally well challenge civil monuments. For in reality they aspire to substitute, in architectonic symbols, a spiritual architecture eager to express itself for a spiritual architecture that has exhausted its virtue. That does not make it any the less true that they only reject the symbols of the older order because they confuse them with the inner reality which every edifice must obey if it wishes to remain living. There is much more difference between Saint-Sulpice and Notre Dame, which pretend to express the same religion, than between Versailles, the palace, and Notre Dame, the church, because Saint-Sulpice sacrifices the structural basis of Notre Dame to a false principle of religious pomp which Notre Dame ignores absolutely, while Versailles, like Notre Dame, recognizes this same basis.

The differences betrayed by buildings as far apart in appearance as the cathedral of Rheims and the Trianon of Gabriel, the palace of Angkor Vat and the Sansedoni Palace at Siena, testify much more to a state of mind peculiar to such and such a people or epoch than to a fundamental discord in the science of their builders

Architecture does not change its mind but its soul. While remaining, in contrast to painting, the common expression of an ensemble of knowledge, beliefs, and systematized ideas, architecture may tend, like painting, toward the symphonic character it reveals in India, in Europe from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, and in Cambodia, or it may tend toward the melodic character it reveals in mediæval Italy and in France during the two centuries before the revolution.[1] It is a matter of relation between universal mystic sentiment and individual reason. In the first case universal sentiment predominates to such an extent that it leaves the individual free to express, within his limits, his measureless sensuality and his confused passions.

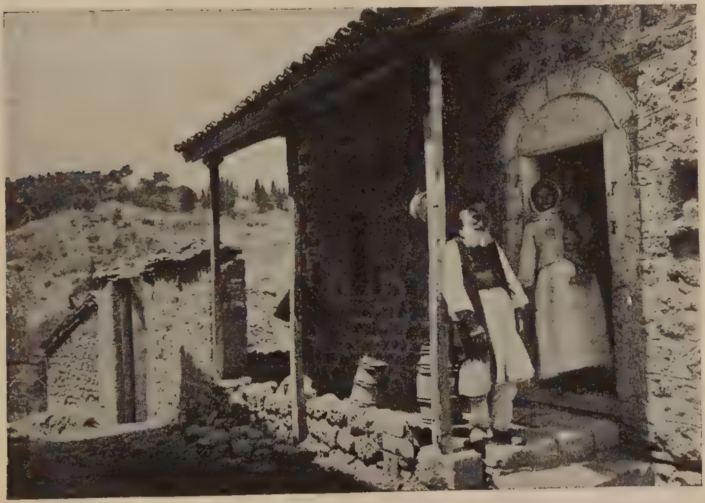

FIG. 133

GREEK HUT

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[1] Figs. 30, 36, 53, 79, 88, 131.

In the second case, the reason of the individual is so sure of its supremacy that it includes in its logic, its will, and its measure the ensemble of the sentiments and beliefs of all individuals.

III

Egyptian sculpture,[1] so completely architectural, seems to me to demonstrate, even better than architecture, that the relationship between the purest plastic art and geometrical abstraction is merely a relationship between neighbors. Or rather there exist parallel tendencies that meet at an indefinite but very living point of consciousness, where the spiritualized plastic art approaches the numerical absolute and where humanized geometry aspires to assume a material form the better to touch our hearts. Its symmetry is only in appearance. The pretended *law of frontality* that is supposed to characterize it is only a commonplace and very crude approximation. The two parts of the Egyptian statue, if we imagine it as bisected, cannot be placed side by side. Asymmetrical, they maintain their equilibrium through very slight but incessant vibrations that assure life and continuity to the ensemble.

In this case, also, the surfaces are animated. With such an animation, indeed, that at no point of it can we say there begins or ends the continuous wave that envelops it and lulls it, so to speak, in its own immobility. One would say it was modeled like a planet, by some force at once mathematical and living which, seen from a distance, gives it the appearance of a clearly geometrical creation, but which is seen, from near by, to recognize details that contract its surfaces or smooth them out again; thus almost imperceptible wrinkles come to have the force of valleys and mountains, a slight change of accent tells of the billows of the forests, and the obedient mass of the atmosphere and the waters rolls with the movement of the sculpture.

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[1] Figs. 27, 38, 65, 175, 197, 199.

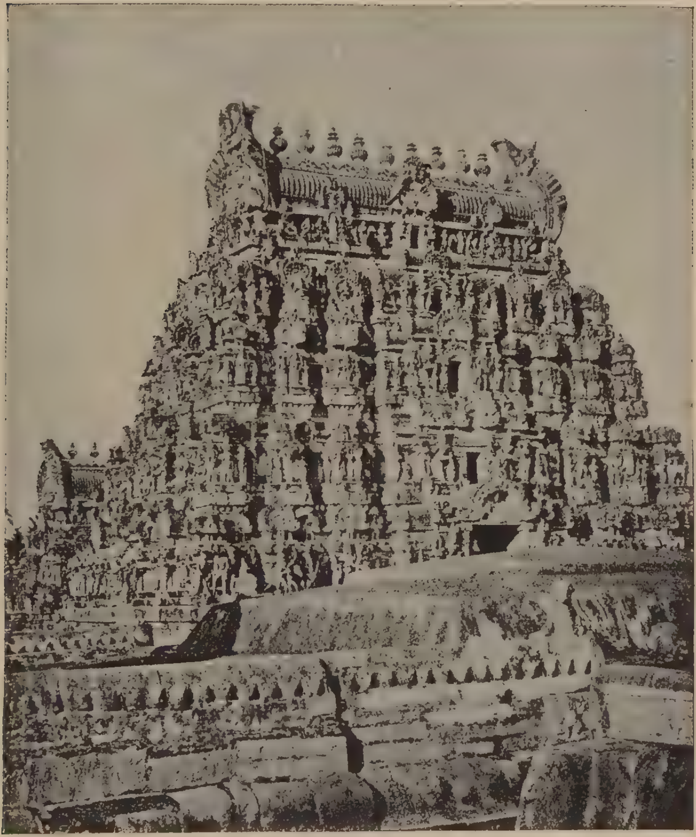

FIG. 131

SYMPHONIC ARCHITECTURE (India)

It is possible—and probable—that we must seek in the influence of geological conditions the origin of the particular vision of form that gives to the Egyptian sculptural block the aspect of a cube,[1] to the Chinese block[2] the aspect of a sphere or cylinder, and to the Hindu block[3] a sinuous aspect that evokes an eternally agitated sea.

But it seems, nevertheless, as if in all these imposing forms, in which sculpture appears still half caught in the architectural matrix, there lives a central force which obliges the significant surfaces to turn about it with a fatality as invincible as that of gravitation. What has made the success of Greek art is perhaps its divergence from this, a divergence very clear-cut in its dynamics and very eclectic in its aspects; I mean that, while remaining submissive, at least at its apogee, to this central force, the diverse elements that constitute it appear to emerge from the spherical and sinuous model, if one considers, for example, the Ionic sculpture that comes from Asia—I am thinking of the *Hera*[4] of Samos—and the cubic model that comes perhaps from Egypt, and in any case is more congenial to the keen and categorical mind of Occidentals. I am thinking of the Doric[5] Apollos.[6] We see in them traits that still persist slightly in Myron and Polycleitus or, on the other hand, in the anonymous sculptor of Olympia, until they fuse in attic art where they are summed up in Phidias.

From this moment Greek art is strongly marked by the pursuit of the anatomical modeling which makes sculpture deviate from its architectural rhythm and at the same time turns Occidental civilization toward a too narrow rationalism. And this pursuit seems con-

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[1] Fig. 65.

[2] Fig. 133.

[3] Fig. 132.

[4] Fig. 135.

[5] Do not Greek legends make Danaos, the founder of the Peloponnesian or Doric-Hellenic civilization, come out of Egypt?

[6] Fig. 134.

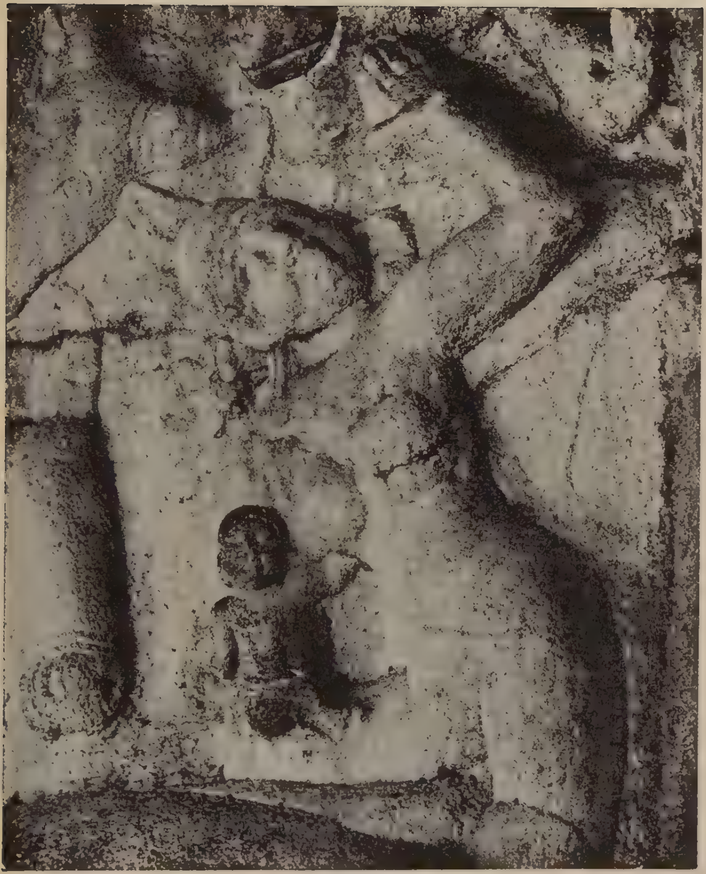

Fig. 132

Sinuous Modelling (India)

ditioned by the encounter of the cubic mass with the spherical mass in the sinuosity of movement. I do not ignore its splendor at the outset. It is a unique moment of history, one which brings together the inner structure of the motionless form and the external appearance of its relations and interchanges. At that moment actuality and change, instinct and intelligence, subject and object, life and style, the particular and the general fuse in a universal and average expression. At the instant when anatomical perfection is attained in a fugitive equilibrium one does not think at all of anatomy but of the appearance of nature, of bodies full of blood, bursting with sap, of these human torsos and limbs thrusting themselves up from the soil like roots, mingling their branches, with veins and tendons going through them as the fibers run through the bark of a tree, one notes the knobby knees, the shoulders, the bony skulls stirring under the rough, stretched skin.[1] Anatomy for its own sake appeared only with Lysippus and was henceforth to lead sculpture astray through the academic Greco-Roman art.

On the contrary, as if frightened at the impasse into which they were being led, the more sensitive sculptors who followed Praxiteles were to seek, through the play of light over form, to approach painting whose reign was about to begin. In Greek Egypt, soon afterward in Byzantium,[2] and thanks in part to the vague but growing and assertive Christian sentiment, this art will gradually forget anatomy and turn toward music through the mysterious play of the relations of flat tones and spaces, through bold deformations tending to moral expression: large eyes, narrow skulls, sparkling jewels, contours melting into the penumbra. Thus sculpture, the most material of the arts, will have

[1] Figs. 1, 12, 14, 85, 208.

[2] Figs. 37, 89, 172, 204.

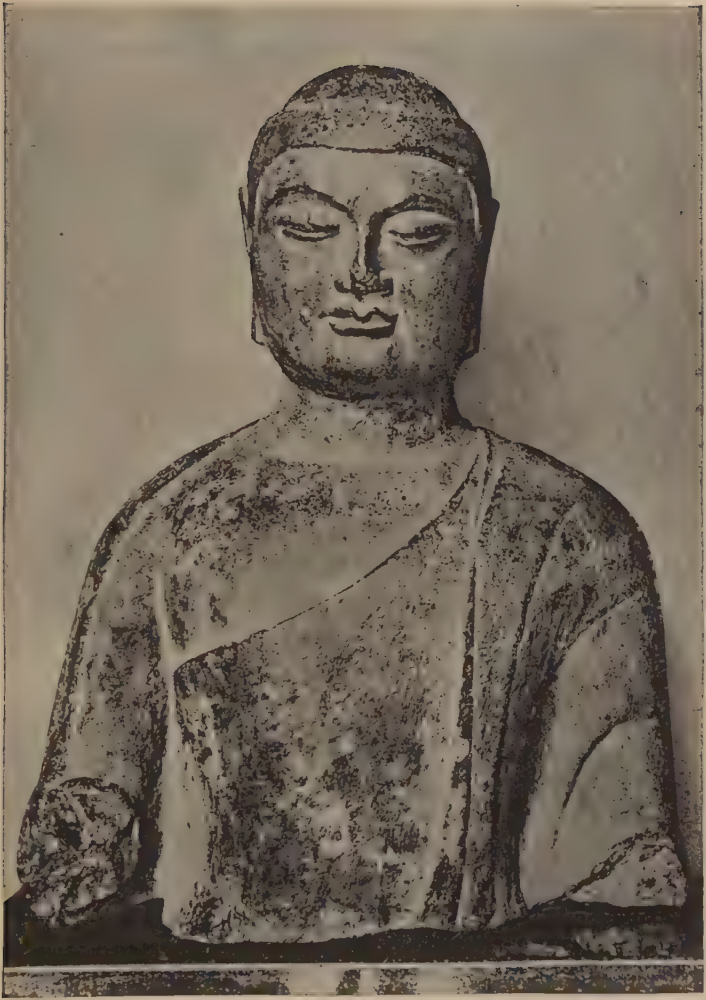

Fig. 133

Spherical Modelling (China)

created the intelligence which, ending in painting, will recreate sensuality through it. And painting, through sensuality, will lead back to the mystic sentiment that anatomical rationalism has destroyed. Admirable circulation of the spiritual forces in the interior of matter which they animate and which animates them in a continual interchange! When its wandering musical waves have encountered on all sides the space where they are to expire, painting will rediscover in that space the common plastic field which architecture will then take up again.

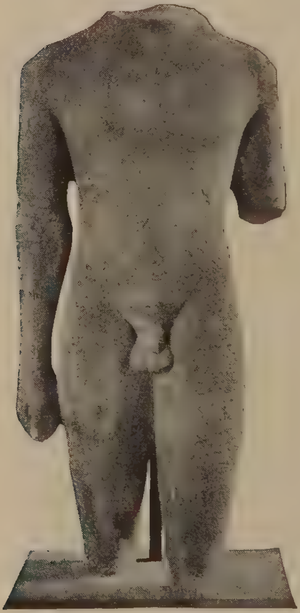

FIG. 134
DORIC MODELLING

Thus sculpture dies at the moment when it tries to overstep its function, which is to define the structure of the object, as that of architecture is to define the structure of society, as that of painting is to define the structure of the individual, as that of music is to assure the passage between the individual and society. Sculpture's field of oscillation between architecture and music remains immense, on condition that it does not lose from sight the source of its strength: the function that I have just mentioned and that assures the gravitation of its significant surfaces about its central architectural principle.

Thus we shall see Chinese sculpture, and especially Egyptian sculpture, evoke, from their crude beginning, the eternal, circular movement of music[1] precisely because, since the mythical body remains almost identical with itself, it is in the interior of the statue—art of permanent, objective, material reality—that the musical passage between painting and architecture takes place. Thus we shall see mediæval French sculpture participate with architecture itself in a universal and profoundly touching movement toward the mystery of painting, because it never ceases to anticipate the appearance of the individual in the Occident.[1] Thus we shall see Hindu sculpture never emerging from an eternal mobility in which form, the social body, the individual fuse and blend in a mingling of architecture, painting, the dance, and music.[2] Thus we shall see this same spirit declaring itself with inexpressible clarity in Cambodian sculpture, where the universal communion is still more strict, better ordered and, as it were, rationalized, and where the *apsaras*[3] repeat the

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[1] Figs. 27, 38, 40, 133, 173, 175, 197, 199.

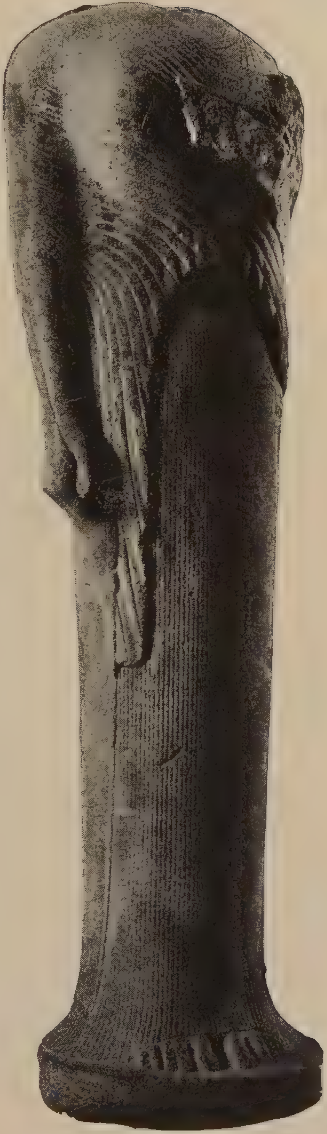

Fig. 135

Ionic Modelling

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[1] Figs. 30, 53, 63, 88, 106, 121, 165, 178, 191.

[2] Figs. 39, 97, 131, 132, 136, 177, 178, 216.

[3] Fig. 136.

Egyptian miracle, no longer in immobility but in movement, through the apparent symmetry of the two wings of their dance, which is nothing but perfection in rhythmic equilibrium. Thus we shall see Mexican sculpture[1] snatching sanguinary and palpitating fragments from form, grouping them in expressive masses about a moving center, as if the social myth forbade it to define its nature, the nature of the form and that of the individual; we witness the disturbing cruelty of a civilization, that is inscrutable to us I imagine, whose steps reel, whose periods are undefined, but in which the feeling for painting, sculpture, and building, as powerful as it is confused, succeeds in maintaining itself in an intermediary form of expression from which nothing can be detached without ruining the ensemble. With the negro,[2] the architectural tendencies of whose sculpture are more rudimentary, but perhaps more clearly indicated, something quite different is produced. The fiery colors with which he besmears his statues define a brutal, impulsive, candid individuality, plunged entirely in the social body which does not exercise any restraint upon it and seems, quite on the contrary, to repeat its accents.

I have told what it is that characterizes the genius of the black man of Oceanica or of Africa, and within this genius is the secret of his art. In his idols, his jewelry, and his weapons, he renders through modeling the *rhythmic reality* which characterizes him beyond all else. Not that his art lacks objectivity. It is, contrary to what most æstheticians believe, fiercely realistic: it accentuates the dominant essentials of the object to the point of caricature. In one case a certain bird is defined by its beak, in another a wild beast is represented through its jaw, a woman through a torso or the breasts,

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[1] Fig. 55.

[2] Figs. 47, 49, 93 bis, 198.

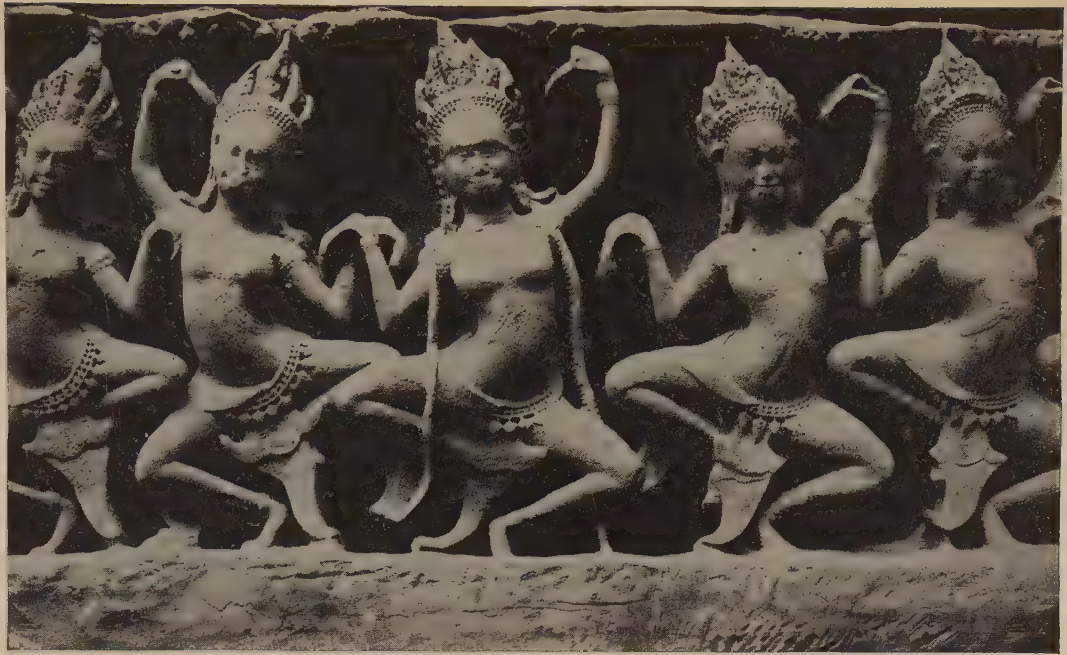

Fig. 136

Rhythmic Equilibrium (Cambodia)

or a man by a muzzle thrust forward with the complete innocence that means hunger or desire.

But the black never concerns himself with descriptive "truth," as does European art in general—that is, with the average anatomical relationships of the different parts of the object. The immemorial stability of the black civilizations is translated directly by those rudimentary sculptures in which (as far as our ignorance of their chronology permits us to judge) there is not the slightest hint of evolution toward either of the poles of artistic expression—the collective or the individual.

From this point of view, their art is even freer than that of the Hindus, or possibly, indeed, that of the Aztecs. The secret cadences which animate their centers of receptivity and of representation sweep with them everything and give order to everything. The one element that stands out is that of the rhythmic relationships. The arms or the legs may be shortened, or indeed suppressed, the organs, the accidentals, or the lines of the face may be disposed without respect for their natural functions; the musical exaltation, incorporating in the divine void both the individual and race indiscriminately, reveals to the spectator a second reality which is absolutely new. With reference to this exaltation, the sculptural masses are as freely disposed as are the musician's conception and expression when he imposes order on the masses of sound. For the negro, more than for any other man, nature is only a dictionary, consulted with as much of fever as of candor. There are works of art of a higher type, but none more authentic than these, which, apart from all social considerations, would suffice to define the essence of the work of art.

IV

Painting also presents, according to the epoch, the race, and the painter, the predominant tendencies

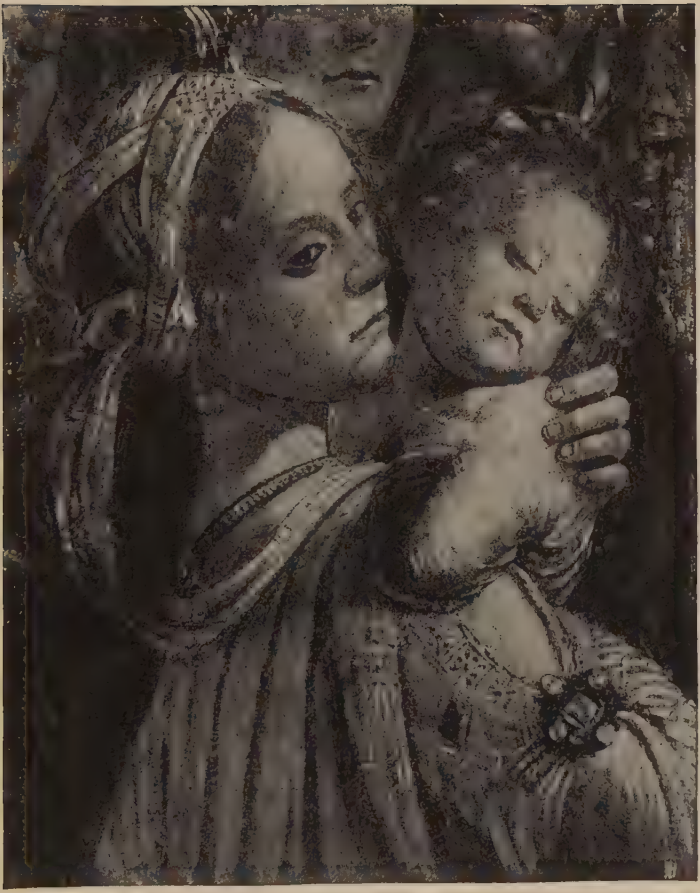

Fig. 137

Sculptural Painting (Signorelli)

that will clothe it in one case with an architectural aspect, in another with a sculptural aspect, elsewhere with a close and harmonious association of all the plastic elements of which it is the flowering in the heart of the individual. I shall never grow weary of repeating that it is indeed the individual that painting expresses, everywhere, through its power to restore, with the aid of the innumerable combinations at its command—contrasts, oppositions, complementary blendings, light, shadow, half-tints, values, reflections, passages—the complexity of the human soul and the eternal or fugitive components that reveal it to us. Nevertheless, in the case of Giotto one finds painting almost entirely sheathed in architecture. With the Florentines, the Umbrians, and the Romans, da Vinci, Signorelli, Piero della Francesca, Michael Angelo,[1] it quits the monumental order to crystallize in the sculptural form. With the Venetians[2] it appeals to all the voices of space to realize the great visual symphony and tends toward music without losing sight either of the form that firmly unites the elements of the chromatic poem or the architectonic rhythm that assures their cohesion.

It is true that the more one withdraws from the mythical or social fictions to plunge deeper into the labyrinths of the heart the more do successive epochs in the same country stamp their characteristics upon painting and lead us perceptibly, in Italy for instance, from architecture to music—as from Giotto to Veronese—passing through the intermediary stages of line, mass, the relations of masses, and the relations of colors—Angelico, Masaccio, da Vinci, Raphael, Titian.[3] But, independent of epoch, reasons of race and environment impose upon this art here, linear tendencies that persist

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[1] Figs. 92, 137, 142.

[2] Figs. 31, 144, 146, 162.

[3] Figs. 43, 86, 138, 139, 143, 162.

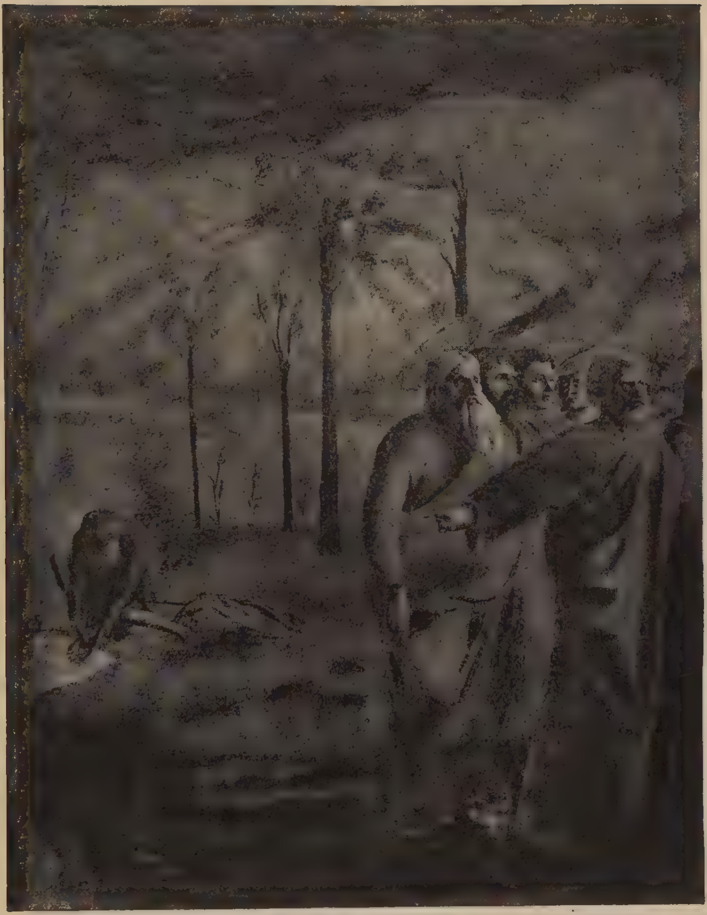

Fig. 138

Transitional Painting (Masaccio)

to the very end, elsewhere, orchestral tendencies that have been present since the beginning. I am thinking, in the first case, of the whole of Italy outside of Venice, and of France before Watteau and romanticism, in the second case of Flanders, Holland, Spain, and especially of Venice and the French romanticists.[1] And I remark the tendency of Oriental painting—especially the Chinese[2]—to remain within the limits of a symphony that is reduced as to the number of instruments but very rich as to their quality; chamber music, in a word, which expresses the slight desire felt by even the most individual Oriental to leave the agreeable edifice which atavism, tradition, myth, dogma, and the social environment have built for him.

In any case painting, even on reaching the verge of music, should escape no more than sculpture from the force that maintains it in the orbit of a logic that derives its vigor from the example of living organisms. It is scattered and dissolved if all its organs do not recognize as their center a united skeleton whose presence is felt even in their most extravagant motions and which is forever constraining them by means of the arabesque (on the surface or in depth) to recognize its secret mastery. Almost all painters—I am speaking of the true painters—develop away from the colored surfaces toward which the impulse of their senses draws them and to which, unfortunately, it most often confines them. The greatest, and the greatest alone, returning to the organic connection of forms in function, seek the bony framework of these forms under the relief which light and shade produce; they seek the contours of the forms hidden by the gradations of atmosphere and the succession of values. This is the recent history of

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[1] Figs. 31, 32, 87, 140, 144, 157, 162, 163.

[2] Fig. 41.

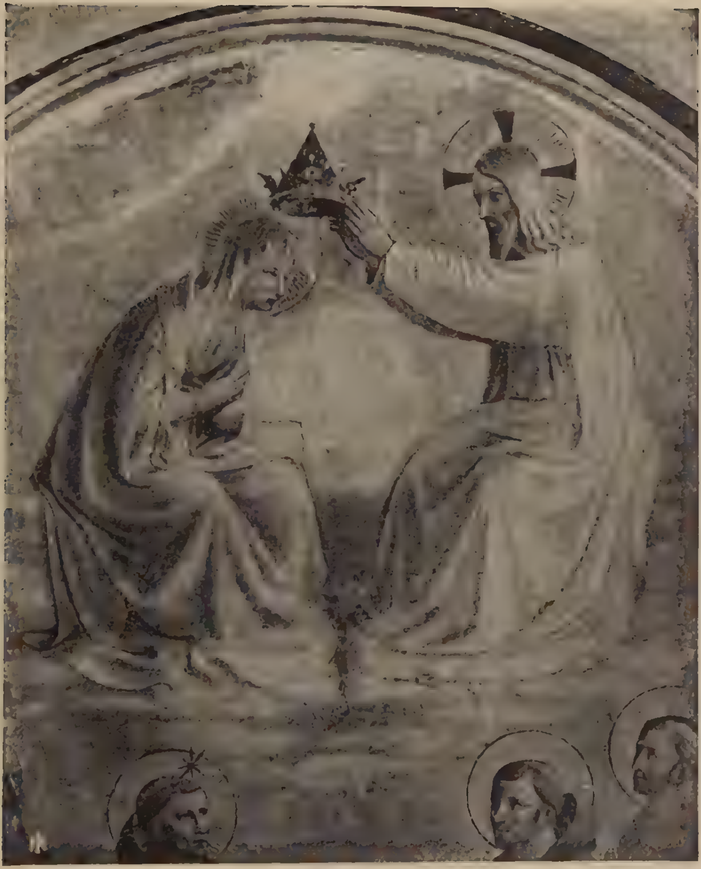

Fig. 139

Melodic Painting (Fra Angelico)

Renoir. It is that of Delacroix. It is that of Rembrandt.

It happens more rarely that the mind, instead of returning painfully to its sources, departs boldly from them as occurs, it seems to me, with Corot or Velasquez, who based their work on irreproachable composition and very compact form, only little by little to discover space and to unite in it all the surface points of their forms in action. I do not speak of Titian or Giorgione, creators of great painting, who were obliged to follow this course, since sculpture and architecture immediately preceded them, nor even of Raphael, who would have followed it, no doubt, if he had lived longer. In general it is the musical sense of painting that leads back to construction, and it is therefore remarkable that this musical sense grows more delicately perceptive in proportion as the painter's understanding approaches the structural foundations of painting and, by approaching them, advances toward the depths. The spiritual adventure of Cézanne is typical in this respect; in proportion as form becomes dense and turns on his canvas as if to carve the flat surface of the picture, it seems as if color ascends from this picture to ornament the surface, and as if, through the play of what he himself called "modulation," a stirring music rises from it, binding together all points of the painted expanse. When the painter has recovered his pure instinct, when he seems to have forgotten architecture, sculpture, and painting itself to listen to the silent orchestra that accords its thousand voices in his musical imagination, it is only then that he is truly a painter, a sculptor, or an architect, that is to say, an individual.

Painting, then, expresses the subtle, essential, and multiple passage of sculpture into music. It attains its greatest expressive equilibrium in the instant when it still contains a maximum of musical significance.

It is this and nothing but this that separates painting symphonically organized by the Venetians and represented at its summit by Rubens, Rembrandt, and Velasquez, from painting melodically realized by the Primitives. In geometrical language, the latter express themselves through a curve and the former through a sphere—two very different arts, one of which may be preferred to the other but which cannot be compared. Between Angelico and Rubens[1] there is, if not identity, at least similarity of method. There is a radical difference—almost an antagonism—in spirit. The primitive has given way to permit his successors to grasp better that space which the sculptor and the architect believed they had already conquered but which they had only imprisoned. The two dimensions of which he disposes on his canvas have the privilege, by a touching paradox, of leading painting to such an effort of the intelligence that, on a single plane, it will suggest the third dimension which the sculptor and the architect really command, and, going farther than they, it will discover, in this reconquered third dimension, sensations that will demand time in which to manifest and express themselves fully. This in turn will lead to music by a geometrical progression having its permanent source in the senses and the heart.

Quite evidently, it is thanks to geometry that Occidental painting has succeeded, often to the detriment of its freshness of feeling and its ingenuousness of sentiment, in delivering to the individual methods hitherto controlled by architecture and sculpture only, so that it might people its artificial space with a thousand subtle impressions and ideas that architecture and sculpture are incapable of expressing. The invention of perspective distinctly separates the modern European from the mediæval European and the Asiatic, and expresses the antagonistic character presented by two such men as Rubens and Angelico or any great Persian, Chinese, or Japanese painter.[1] In the evolution of Italian painting from Uccello to Raphael we surprise the astounding phenomenon of the intelligence snatching the geometric instrument from the science of building to pass, with its help, from rigorously impersonal science to the exclusively personal feeling of the musicians.

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[1] Figs. 139, 140.

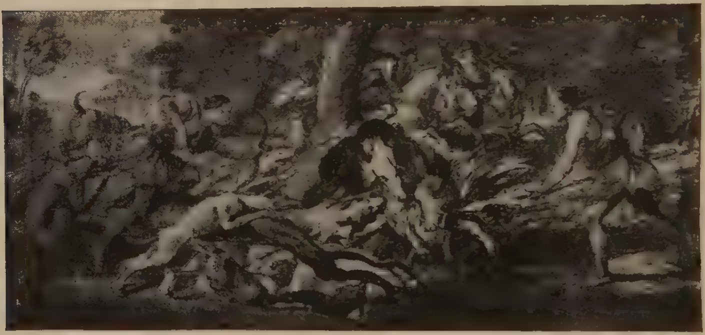

Fig. 140
Symphonic Painting (Rubens)

In the first case, that is to say in Uccello, there is an evident dualism, the picture developing according to two juxtaposed planes—first the plane of sentiment expressed through spirited form and brilliant but somber color, then the plane of reason fastening itself on the other like a parasite. Each makes a visible effort to be absorbed in the other, with perspective trying awkwardly at every instant to enclose between its inflexible lines the powerful, living emotion that constantly escapes it and disrupts it: a touching and painful dualism from which da Vinci, himself, will not escape. In the other case, that is to say in Raphael, perspective enters definitely into the instinctive methods of the poet, who thinks of it no more than a writer thinks of his spelling and having ceased to be a clumsy, half-formed discovery it becomes a mechanical implement. Midway between Uccello and Raphael is Piero della Francesca, who marks the point of supreme, harmonic oscillation and who, after having entirely conquered geometric space, attains the profound solidarity of instinct which one finds between geometry and life in the highest architecture. Henceforth he treats space as if it were an actor—an actor as alive as beings and forms—participating like them and on the same spiritual plane as they, in the drama of creation, and in this game he tastes an intellectual intoxication that we do not find in any of his successors.[1]

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[1] Figs. 41, 68, 139, 140.

In order that the chromatic waves, henceforth free to express the intangible nuances of individual sentiment, should complete their final stage, it would be necessary for the Venetians to perceive the sounds, murmurs, and echoes that are exchanged, by means of the atmosphere, in this definitely conquered geometrical space. One finds also, in the very technique of the architect, the sculptor, and the painter, traces of a mysterious process, moving from our moral skeleton to the flesh that covers it, which pure science reproduces in the same ascending and never closed circle. Architecture precedes sculpture as mathematics preceded the science of anatomy. Sculpture precedes painting as anatomy preceded biology. Biology, in its turn, apparently tends to find mathematical supports so as to return, through them, to the framework of life, as painting passes on to architecture the task of remaking the real space it has gradually quitted in order to discover supra-sensible space with the aid of the musicians.

The spirit of painting floats about it as the air floats about us. This subtle art is the most mysterious and the least known of all those that express us; no doubt because, though barely emerged from definite form and tending toward fluctuating spacial relations, it seems to become fixed without ever attaining the unstable point where the object and the subject reach an equilibrium. It commands means so diverse that they can be diametrically opposed to each other, which has not failed to occur. Drawing describes and states precisely; color evokes and suggests. The one provides the architectural pole of painting, the other its musical pole, while its sculptural nucleus solidifies in the mass in which these two forms of expression fuse when they realize, in a few heroic works, its most intoxicating creations. Truly men like Rubens or Rembrandt or Velasquez seem placed at the center of the mysterious presence of the human mind in the world, bound as they always are by the continuity of the values and

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[1] Figs. 141, 142, 143.

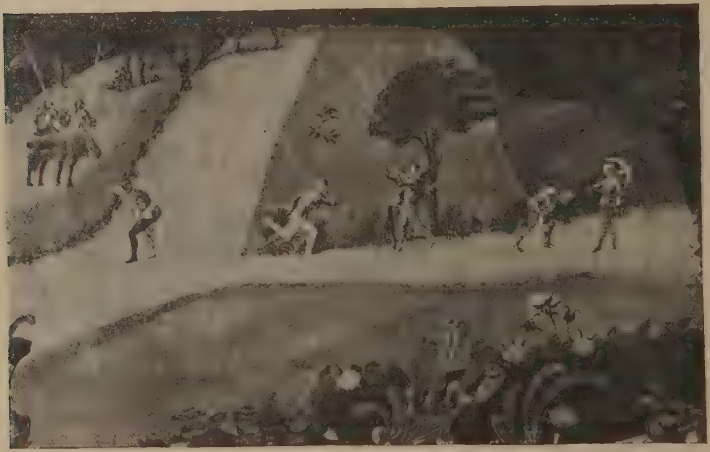

FIG. 141
DISCOVERY OF PERSPECTIVE (Uccello)

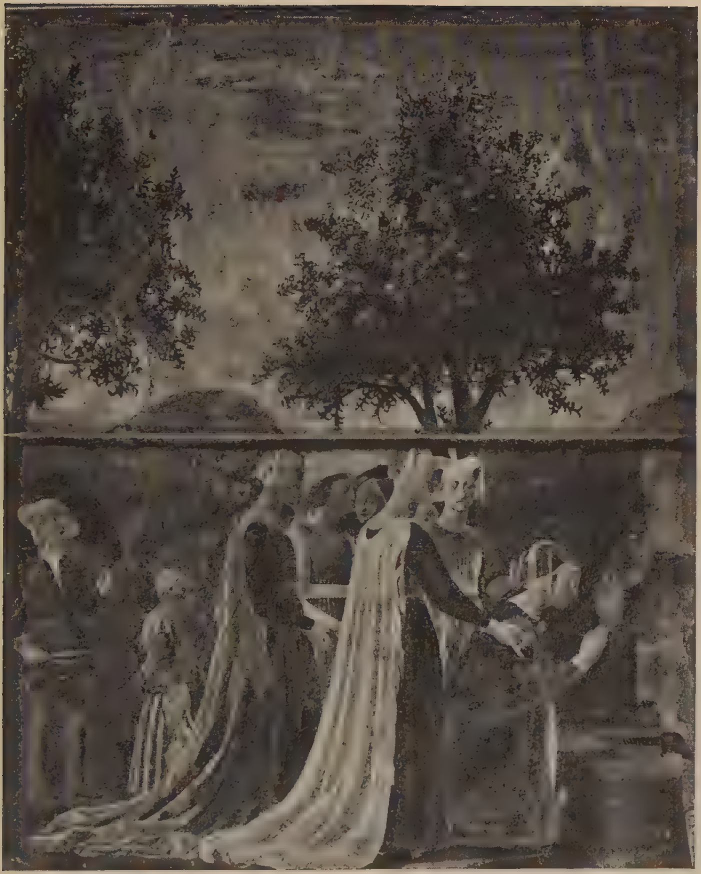

FIG. 142

CONQUEST OF PERSPECTIVE (Piero della Francesca) relations of tones of which they dispose, to all the sensible points of space, where their harmonic antennæ awaken the sonorous echoes which the musician is to collect; they are bound also, through the continuity and overlapping of the masses they display, to all the points of solid reality, which lead them nearer and nearer to the roots of trees, to the female matrix, to the deepest and most secret geological strata of the soil.

One work, above all others, seems to me to define and to symbolize this impression of a circular world, at once closed on all sides and united to the infinite through invisible tentacles, which painting alone can really create, even if all great things evoke it in a less direct manner—some Egyptian statues, for example, or the *Essays* of Montaigne, or some phrase of Shakespeare's, or some *Oratorios* and *Cantatas* of Bach. The great sketch of "Paradise" by Tintoretto[1] is as far as possible from the "imitation" of natural forms which one finds, nevertheless, everywhere in it, and which are very faithful and exact when one studies it in detail. It is also as close as possible to a vast, concentric ensemble of waves of color, in which, nevertheless, nothing vague or indefinite is to be found. There are, I believe, eight hundred personages and thirty or forty "subjects." Not one is conspicuous though not one conceals itself. There seems to be no "subject" and one does not notice the personages. This miracle is produced by the complex and multiple relations of tones, forms, and contours that interpenetrate one another and reply to one another, of echoes that call to one another and are repelled, of crowded fleecy masses that make one think of heaped-up clouds, or even of the far-away sound of thunder and cannon. It is a pure visual symphony in which nature, closely followed, is only a pretext to build a monument entirely contained

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[1] Fig. 144.

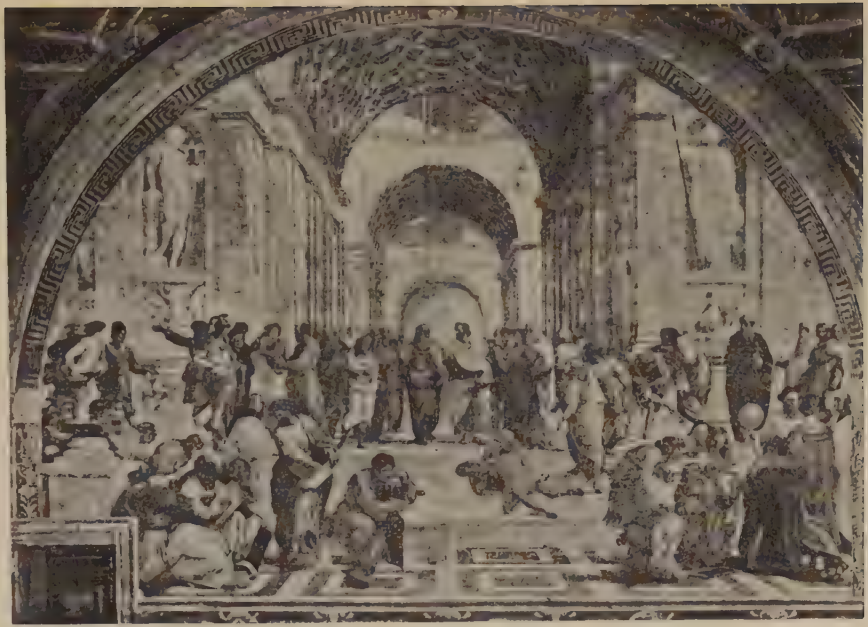

Fig. 143

Possession of Perspective (Raphael)

in an imagination determined to attach to its center all the points of the universe.

V

The dance is a neglected art. The cinematograph a naissant art. Both are misunderstood. It seems to me, however, that the cinema and the dance can yield us the secret of the relations of all the plastic arts with space and with the geometrical figures that give us at once the measure and the symbol. The dance in every epoch, like the cinema in ours, is charged with uniting plastic art with music, through the miracle of a rhythm at once visible and audible, that introduces into *time* the three dimensions of space. The living and passionate character of the dance should assure it an eternal pre-eminence over the arts that develop parallel with it and serve it most often as a setting. But on their part these arts have the persistence of the matter that expresses them, they still mingle in our lives, they do not fade from our memories while the sound and the movement of the dance are lost in oblivion with the very existence of the dancer. Who knows whether the cinema, by perpetuating the dance under the eyes of successive generations and especially by finding in its resources the means of prolonging in time the moving drama of form, is not destined to restore to their dignity the most complete of the plastic arts, which incorporate in their rhythm all the expressive elements of the spiritual tragedy which architecture, sculpture, painting, and music have shared hitherto?

The youngest children dance. The animals dance. As a part of the need of the most elementary rhythm, that which urges us to strike the earth in cadence alternately with one foot and the other, I imagine that

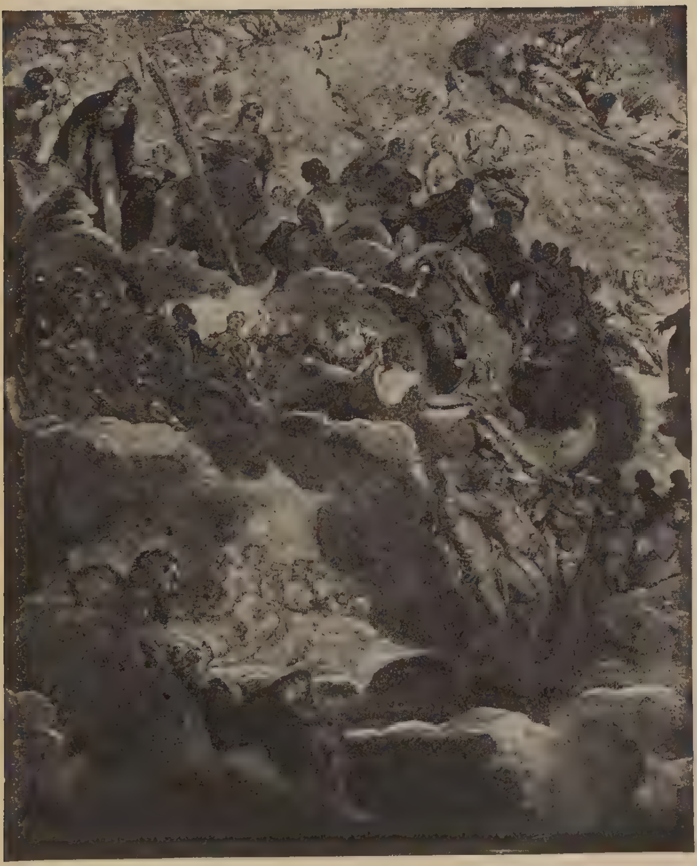

FIG. 144

THE VISUAL SYMPHONY (Tintoretto)

the dance preceded music and even architecture. Music, no doubt, was created to accompany the primitive dance and the first rhythm must have been the clapping of hands and the cries of the spectators. Later, when architecture was developing, then later with sculpture, with painting, with music, the dance wound from one to another like a living garland, drawing on their resources in order to increase and diversify the complexity of its figures and the numbers of its executants through costume, ornament, external decoration, and the infinite variety of the movements of the orchestra. It gradually introduced time into the evolution of plastic art, even uniting it to the cultivation of the passions and for a while serving as a bond of flesh among their diverse expressions.

Through its geometry in motion, through its continuous harmony, to which the incessant pursuit of their center of gravity instinctively constrains all those who take part in it, the dance expressed the simplest but the most self-evident among all the victories of the spiritual order over senses that have arrived at the height of Dionysian intoxication. Through its rôle of conserving and exalting the power of rhythm, it has maintained, in all civilizations, an accord between the life of men—now too animal, now too intellectual—and something that perhaps is God but in any case is the gravitation of the heavens.

There cannot be a doubt of this. For gravitation is at the source of the rhythm without which art would not exist. The cadenced sound of our steps and the beating of our hearts certainly prescribe this rhythm for us. But would the rhythm of our steps and of our hearts exist without the circulation of the blood in our arteries and without the weight that attaches us to the soil and necessitates our joints, our muscles, our bony levers? Gravitation regulates them indirectly, as it acts directly on the flux or reflux of water, on the rising and setting of the stars, on the periodic returns of light and the seasons. It is the sole regulator of the universal rhythmic movement which is the great teacher of our lyricism and which the dance reproduces mechanically; without which neither architecture, nor sculpture, nor painting, nor music would exist, and which makes us recognize geometry, the measure of space, in the order and movement of machines and in the order and movement of the very universe. The great mystery is that we felt this rhythm in all superior works of art as well as in the dance—which is a superior work of art for the very reason that it is a humble one—without being able, without knowing how to define it. It is the mysterious law of repetition, of grouping, of the play of numbers which, in the building and the statue, in the picture and the orchestra, assure harmony of proportions and continuity of movement. It is that which forces the drama, whatever may be the feelings that accompany it, grief or joy, despair, enthusiasm, pleasure or sorrow, to know the delight of a superior pleasure, which is the intuitive, sudden, complete certitude of possessing and ordering all its elements in the head and heart.

Thus the dance yesterday and, better, the cinema tomorrow—because its figures persist—both command a supplementary dimension, that of time. In it the play of the body, the arms, the legs, and the counterpoint of combinations group themselves, separate or mingle on the ground or on the screen; they offer to the mind, anxious to maintain the sensations that give it security and strength, a forcible demonstration of the rôle that plastic art and music play among us, by uniting all their manifestations. Thanks to them, harmonies that have hitherto been cut short, enter into a state of continuous becoming. I know quite well that the frieze of the "apsaras" of Angkor[1] already belongs both to the dance, and to music crystallized in a motionless form but preserving through an almost unique miracle, the slow, rhythmic, and continuous undulation of movement. Through an irresistible feeling for the universal solidarity of forms, colors, movements, and sounds, certain works of Tintoretto,[2] Rubens, Delacroix, certain Dravidian sculptures, had already, like the frieze—though to a lesser degree—brought us close to this law of internal and unarrested circulation which the theory of transmutation has elsewhere introduced into science. But to even explain the confused sentiments which they awaken we must still

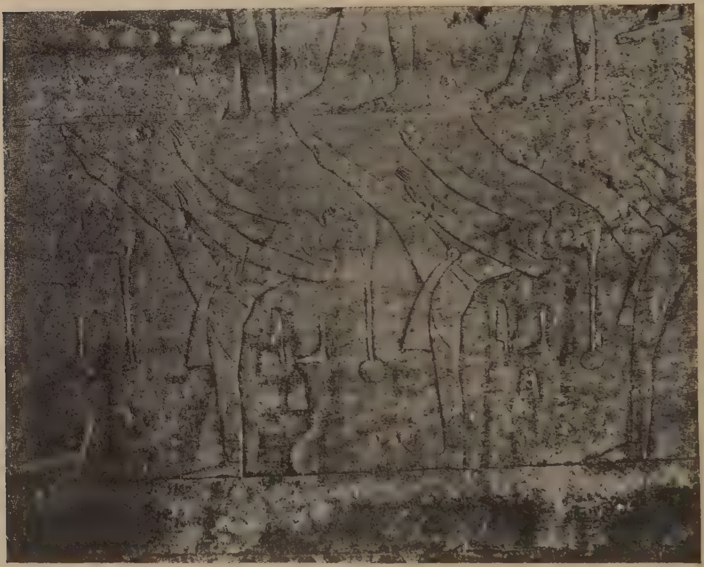

Fig. 145
The Dance (Egypt)

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[1] Fig. 136.
[2] Fig. 146.

consider the cinema and the dance, which register in machinery and in life itself what these scattered works have only been able to suggest.

I shall not explain why mathematical and musical harmony, whose language is absolutely exact, acts especially on the unconscious; everybody knows the irresistible effect of music on the senses, and the instantaneous rise of spiritual intoxication caused in certain minds by a sequence of geometrical propositions or of algebraic equations which are automatically right for them. I shall not explain why plastic and biological harmonies, in spite of their uncertain language, act upon the

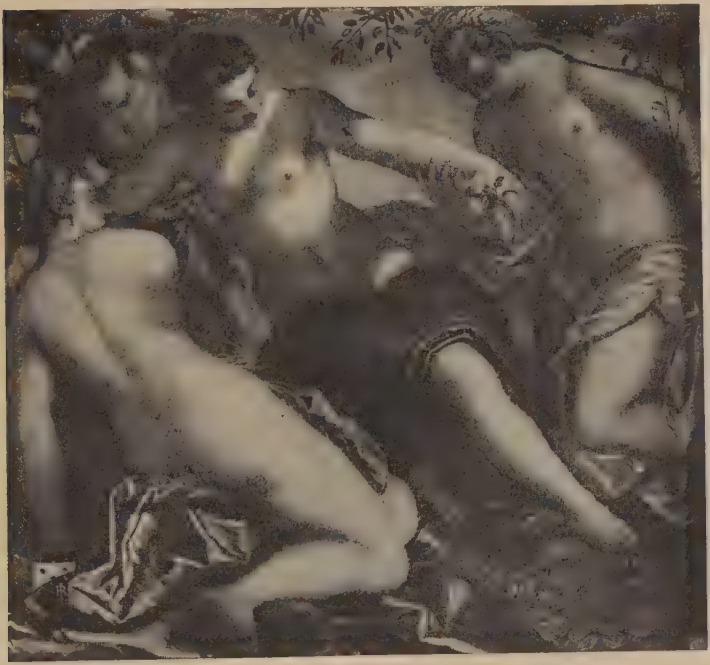

FIG. 146

PRESENTIMENT OF THE CINEMATOGRAPH (Tintoretto) consciousness, (sculpture, painting, and the natural sciences demanding a constant effort of comprehension). Nor why the former harmonies, moving in the abstract, touch our senses primarily, whereas the latter, even when working in the concrete, primarily affects our minds. Perhaps it is purely the effect of the language they speak, impersonal in the one case, personal in the other; thus in one instance we are obliged to communicate with our fellow-creatures, while the other opens all doors for us with a single key.

In any case we always find architecture and painting at the two extremities of the axis, where they reconcile these two distinct forces of the mind in the vast human heart. In one case, to mark the unconscious stage of religions and laws before the appearance of the individual consciousness, we have a maximum of geometrical relations—perceptible but only approximate—and a minimum of frank sensuality, although here matter plays an essential rôle. In the other case, to mark the passage of the individual, surcharged with consciousness, into the unconsciousness of crowds ready to adopt new, universal rhythms, we have a continual sensuous intoxication in mathematical settings that are impossible to grasp although they are strictly exact. I should like to have the dance, and especially the cinema, harmonize all these paradoxical relations in their growing unity.

VI

I have said enough, it seems to me—notably apropos of the "Paradise" of Tintoretto—as to the essential significance of the diverse human interpretations of form in every epoch and in all countries, to be permitted to consider with some skepticism the categories that pretend to relegate painting and sculpture to the rôle of "imitation," while excepting architecture and music on the ground that they are arts of "invention." These are definitions created for the convenience of speech. I know quite well that architecture is a science and should remain a science in which a knowledge of materials and their practical and technical combinations has more importance than any question of sentiment; and that, on the other hand, painting makes use of living forms as a means for displaying its feelings concerning them. But I know, too, that a mysterious unity of style offers to our senses fully as many relationships—here between a Hindu pagoda and the frescoes of Ajanta,[1] there between a canvas of Vermeer and some Dutch house, elsewhere between the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence and the frescoes of Giotto, elsewhere again between the canvases of Poussin and the palace of Versailles—as exist, on the other hand, between Ajanta and Poussin, between Giotto and Vermeer, between Versailles and the Hindu pagoda, between the Dutch house and the Florentine palace.

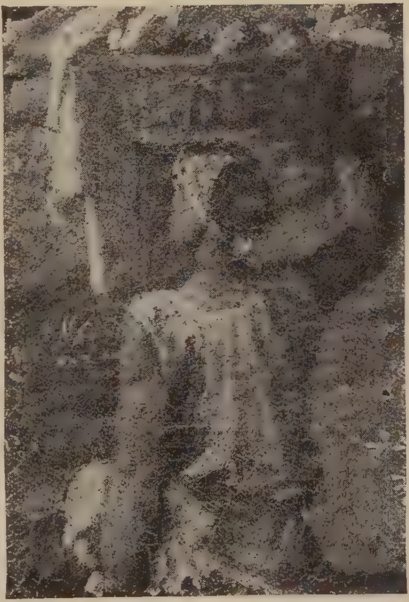
Fig. 147
Analogy (Poussin)

Painting, like architecture, does nothing but organize forms if the permanent control over "nature," which it seeks, is directed by a mistaken sense of the veritable meaning of this organization. It is not necessary to take literally the crude desire of the crowd demanding the "imitation of nature" from those who seek, under the immediate appearance of the world, relations of continuity and unity which, as a general thing, seem to be contradicted by this appearance. It is such imitation, however, that reveals these laws to them. Nor is it necessary to take literally the architect's pretension of ignoring the accidents and aspects of "nature," of recognizing only its laws. He has been taught them at school, of course, if the instruction was properly given, but he will never apply them in a moving and direct manner if he does not recognize them, fully alive, in the forms around him.

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[1] Fig. 45 A.

I know quite well that if the Egyptian column visibly imitates the trunk of the palm tree, and its capital the papyrus or lotus leaves, the Greek architect scarcely thought of a tree when he created, in the midst of the little, twisted olive trees, the tall, straight columns that support the architrave of his temples. But I know also that, before marble buildings appeared, the trunks of real trees sustained other trunks of real trees on which rested the weight of the peasant's roof.[1] I know that caves, their openings enlarged or narrowed by men, have sheltered some of these men in the mass of the cliff, providing them thus with a door, a window, a façade, which so many subsequent buildings were to reproduce. And I know that a natural vault arched above them as it arched, later, above Assyrian halls and Roman baths. I am not unaware, indeed, that the architects of the fully developed epochs had entirely forgotten these things. But I am sure that those of them who made best use of the abstract formulas transmitted by traditional teaching, were also those who, when they went through a forest or a defile between two granite walls, when they contemplated from the center of the desert or the height of a mountain, the cupola of the sky, the edifices of the clouds, the succession of peaks, rounded hills, pyramids, recognized, most constantly, the origin of those sensations from which came the formulas and to which their meditations on the universal analogy led them back.

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[1] Fig. 130.

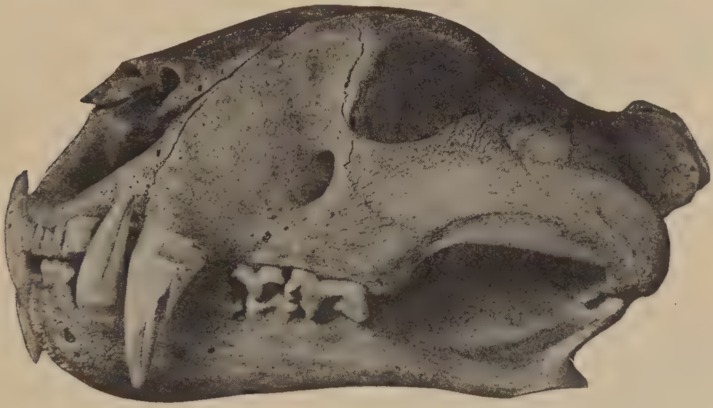

Fig. 148

Natural Sculpture (Skull of a Tiger)

Inversely, a true painter, through hatred of the recipes taught him in the atelier, may pretend vainly to see and know nothing but "nature"; he will return through nature itself and find under these recipes the living organisms which they expressed at the outset. The study of architecture will reveal to the architect the natural splendor of the human groups that form about a birth or a death. The study of nature will reveal to a painter their architectonic splendor.[1]

I have spoken of the universal analogy, so dear to Baudelaire, in which one finds, in fact, the key to the impressive mystery that gives to the work of art, in whatever tongue it speaks, its spiritual value and, if I may say so, its dignity. To surprise this analogy I do not need to explore to their depths the marvelous work of the modern physicists who seek, throughout the three kingdoms, for the lines of force and the corresponding molecular equilibrium from which the morphologic formula of the universe will no doubt arise some day.[1] The obviously related analogies suffice, for any one who uses his eyes, to discover in the world of forms a universal architecture that borrows its most forceful poetry from functional logic. Poussin recognized, as had Homer, a palm trunk in the torso of a young woman and compared with this torso the columns of the Maison Carrée at Nimes.[2] Delacroix was absorbed by similar preoccupations in regard to trees, leaves, and the designs made by water on sand.

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[1] Figs. 158, 159, 160.

In the *Ecrits* of Carrière there is a very suggestive lecture on this subject dealing with the skeletons of the osteological gallery of the museum, in which the framework of the animals appears wholly naked. See the harmonious construction of each of them, the ends of the bones turning in their sockets, the bone levers moved by weight or turned by the play of the muscles, the close overlapping and the hinges of the vertebræ, the amphora of the pelvis to bear the weight of the viscera, the continuity of the bony armature charged with poising and transmitting pressure, and all this apparatus constructed on a monotonous plane, but rendered so living by imperceptible variations of function for walking, for prehension, for mastication, flying, swimming, the profound and elastic play of the heart and the lungs.[3]

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[1] Figs. 116, 117, 118.

[2] Fig. 147.

[3] Figs. 119, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152 bis.

Compare all the essential elements of this forest of skeletons, a forest on the march toward a blind destiny, from that of the most gigantic of the saurians before the flood, to that of the puniest reptile or the smallest bird. Surprise the same forms and the proportions in the bony shell that protects this monster, vast as an oak, and this minute insect which a bud could conceal. See the wind from the chase passing into the pointed muzzles, the slender craniums of these ten different animals, see the wake of the water rushing against these bony flukes that extend along these cylindrical bodies, some as big as towers, others small as worms. Note how power is secured to grind bones in combat or the shells of fruits in eating in these twenty wild animals, great or small, whose long jaws, adjusted perpendicularly one into the other like pieces of metal, are decorated with fangs, laminæ, grindstones for crushing, tearing, fracturing and foraging. Dig in the earth. Pass through a sieve the humus gathered between the little roots where underground insects swarm. Is this triangle of black stone, smooth with sharp

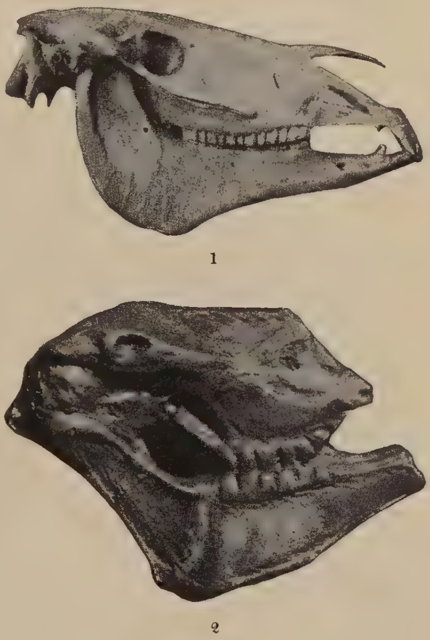

Fig. 149

Analogies (Skull of a Horse)

1. Natural Sculpture
2. Prehistoric Sculpture

edges, the tooth of a vanished monster or a polished flint from some prehistoric atelier? This canine has the look of a vegetable tubercle. This elephant's molar resembles the ripples dug by water on some alluvial soil. This pot of copper, silver, clay, this bronze or marble bust has been so stamped with the mark of the damp earth, by dark stains and livid lines, that it seems a fragment of it, thrown up from its volcanoes, sleeping under its crust with lava and coal.

Go farther. Extend the comparison. This stag's horn is like a wing or a flame. These roots like greedy fingers that clutch their prey to feed on it. These leaves spread out in search of their fluid nourishment like lungs or fish-gills. The sap of plants, like the blood of animals, circulates through the veins. The hide of elephants, of rhinoceroses, of hippopotami, of crocodiles, resembles the bark of trees, or the rugged and mossy surface of rocks. The skin, the flesh of women, resemble the flesh of fruits, the down of flowers. Certain corollas or shells are like sex organs. These furry coats, variegated, speckled, spotted, striped, these reddish-brown wing-shells, cannot be perceived in the jungle grasses because they blend there with the gold and red, with the velvet of the petals, stalks, and leaves. In the moving pictures these torsos, these breasts, these limbs of negresses seem a black bronze full of motion, of which the resonance is gradually awakened by the gleaming lights. The slow motion gives to these running dogs the appearance of snakes, to these flying birds the air of dancers, to these fighting men the look of swimmers, to these skaters circling about, the appearance of living statues that seek their center of gravity in a sinuous movement of continuous harmony. The egg recalls the giant star, whose rotation about its axis makes a perfect spheroid.

The desert quivers like a sea, and breaks into foam in the manner of waves. Gulfs, promontories, estuaries, seem embraced by the water, that great plastic matter that wears stone at its pleasure, washes away gravel and sand, slowly changes the profiles of the earth by alluvial deposit or by erosion, and is indefatigably persistent in striking, caressing, falling, or dripping in the same spot. Would you not suppose that water had taken sixty centuries to model this Egyptian statue with its undulating, moving, smooth planes, balanced like the tide? That for ten thousand years it had rolled under its floods this almost spherical Chaldean or Chinese head? The scratches, as of encounters with the neighboring shingle, the ridges, hollows, and prominences on its surfaces surely seem to have been wrought

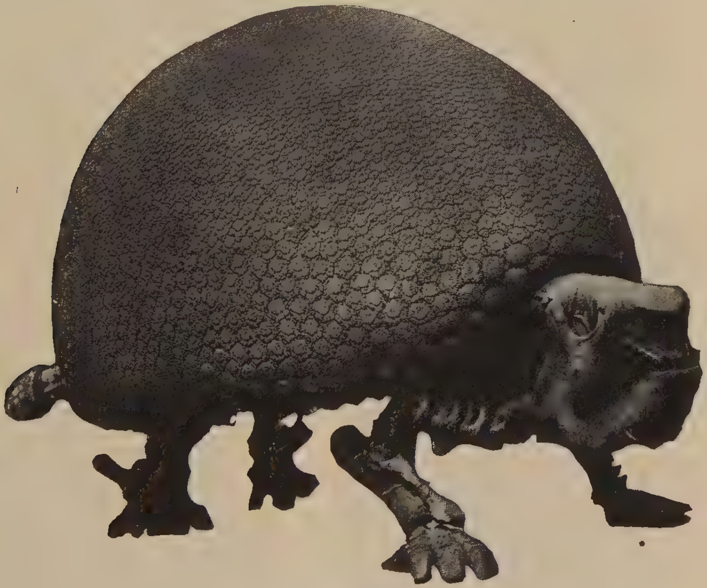

Fig. 150

Natural Architecture (Skeleton of a Glyptodon) by water. The movement of painting of which L. B. Alberti asked, "What is painting if it is not seizing the whole surface of a wave?" is like the movement of water which ever-present mist and air reunite at all the points of space. See the line of the earth blending in the distance with the line of the sky and the sweat of the sea, the tree like a mounting mist, fire, a twisting bush which dissolves in smoke and is slowly swept away to blend in the confused flight of the clouds. Follow the clouds themselves, like cupolas, like towers, like domes piled one upon another, sometimes like the ocean, sometimes like mountains, sometimes like fields covered with snow or flowers. See those glaciers and those lakes glistening like gems. The atmosphere, with its weight, the light, the penumbra, and the reflections that dance, light up and burn out, cause everything that exists to participate in the life of everything else.

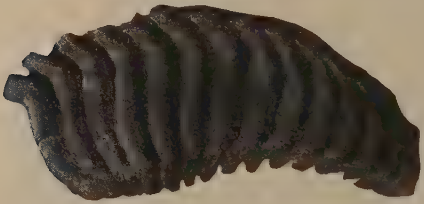

Fig. 151

Tooth of a Fossilized Elephant

The forms of the universe are built upon a single plan. Wherever one looks one finds it. He is poor indeed, who does not know how to see in the skull of a man or an animal, for example, not only an admirably ordered landscape with its valleys and hills, its inner movements, its geological unity and its rhythm, but also a perfect piece of sculpture with its asymmetrical balance, its silent planes, its tapering lines, its expressive reliefs, its sinuous and pure profiles. And when man and his works appear on the earth can it be by chance that his weapon is like a claw, like a horn, like an animal's means of protection, that jewelry entwines the

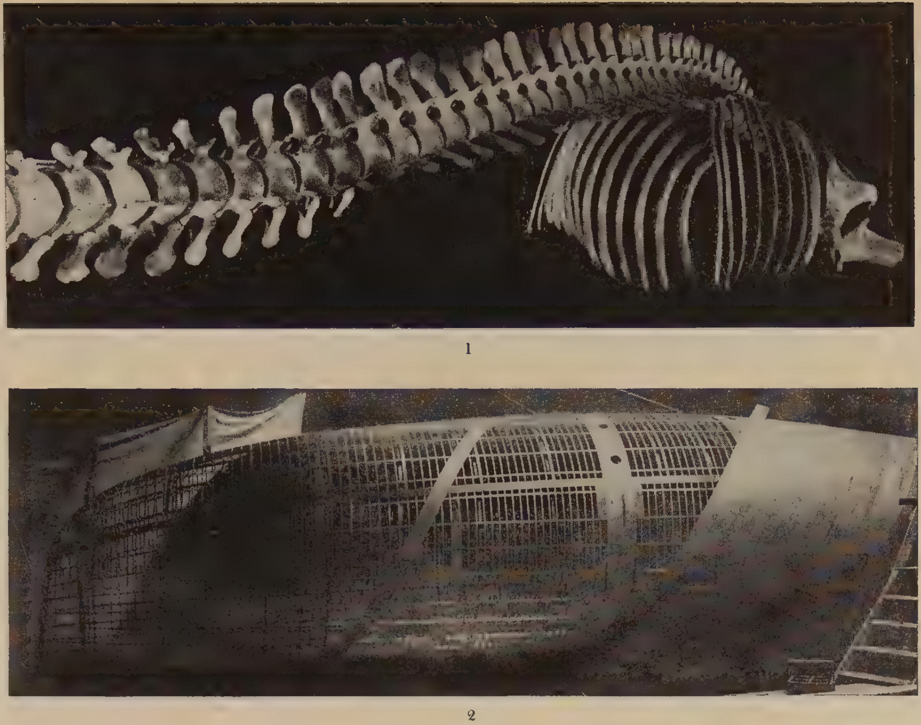

Fig. 152

ANALOGIES

1. Skeleton of Cetacean

2. Body of Hydroplane

neck and arms as a reptile might, that a submarine resembles a fish, an airplane resembles a bird or a gigantic insect, a sail resembles a wing, a boiler or a sewer resembles intestines, and that a motor resembles a beating heart? Is it, then, by chance that religions are constructed on the plane of love, laws on the plane of hunger? Between the mind and the objects on which it dwells and which, for its nourishment and security, attract it and shape it unceasingly, there is a continuous and beneficent interpenetration in which the "imitation" of the object ceases when the intelligence begins and in which "invention" stops when the object is forgotten. The sketch of "Paradise" by Tintoretto[1] in which everything is living form, seems as much a work of the mind as the Parthenon or an automobile in which everything is abstract formula. And if the church of Brou resembles "nature" less than the Parthenon or an automobile does, it is not for want of having multiplied living forms, but because, in so doing, it has disregarded the meaning of the abstract formulas. What gives the abstract edifice its natural appearance, what gives the edifice entirely made of actual things its spiritual significance, is the logical articulation of the elements that constitute both in the fever of discovery and the lucid ardor of creation.

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[1] Fig. 144.

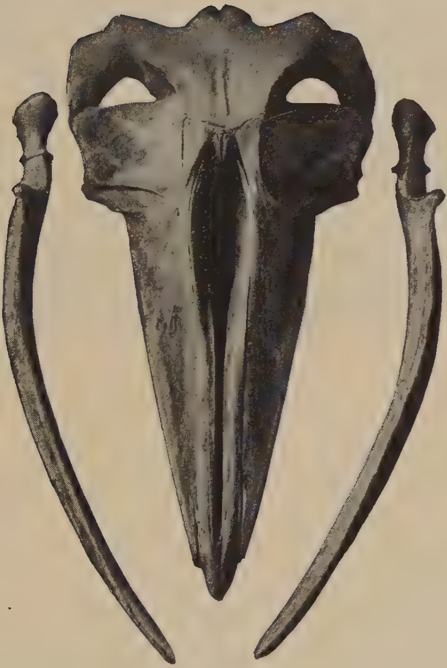

Fig. 152A

Analogies (Skull of Cetacean)

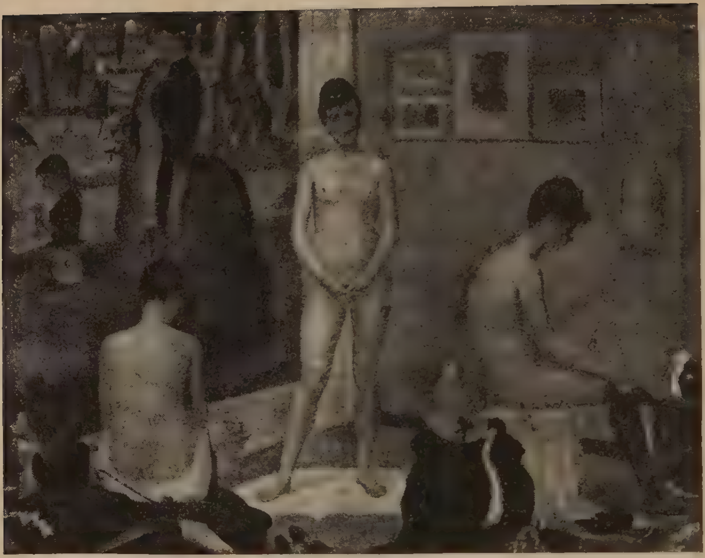

Fig. 153
Seurat

Chapter VII. PEDAGOGICAL DIGRESSIONS

I

WE MAY now ask ourselves if the event, the act, the scene—the "subject"—about which the poet discourses to us, is not significant through its peculiar rôle in a comedy that we play with ourselves in order to keep his work on a utilitarian basis. Perhaps we make use of the subject merely to prevent those who cannot participate in the spiritual purpose of the comedy from catching a glimpse of its evident vanity and from ceasing, thus, to place it like a screen between their thirst for illusion and the terror of living. And perhaps we must seek in this, in the last analysis, the secret of the fascination exercised by the religions.

Since they exalt by means of the subject the social virtues they are charged with propagating, no doubt they have for simple souls a sentimental attraction which the harmony of a work of art would not suffice to create. It is their danger, as I am well aware, that the anecdote may take precedence over the great mystic sentiment and lead the multitude, and its interpreter, the artist, to substitute the seduction of the fact for the educative power of relations. And in the periods when this mystical sentiment is weak it is that which leads true creators to deny the virtue of the "subject" and to exalt the virtue of the object, denuded of all its picturesqueness or even of pure metaphysical construction, so that it no longer has any visible bond with reality. When the crowd turns to images like those of the rue St. Sulpice,[1] Courbet turns away from religious subjects to paint a handsome girl sleeping in the hay, Cézanne to study three apples on the corner of a table, others, ere long, to measure hypothetical space in which there is no longer any incident whatever.

The phenomenon is less new than we might suppose. When Hellenistic art runs after the picturesque, the man of power isolates himself to carve a nude woman[2] or demands in vain of the archaic old masters the secret of simplified planes and evident symmetries. When the supports of the cathedral are decked out with the meanderings of sentimental elaboration, when anecdotal sculpture swamps the profiles of the monument, then the portrait delights in its aloofness, and the abstract conception of line for the sake of line, and ornament for the sake of ornament, replaces the concern for function more or less everywhere. One fine day Arab art forgets the intention of the mosque to revel madly in an endless and objectless game of geometrical formulas.[1] Everywhere the falling in of the keystone of the social vault gives the misled multitude a taste for the anecdotal or picturesque "subject" that flatters its most mediocre instincts, or else it drives the solitary creator in just the opposite direction, to a rancorous contempt for the sentimental pretext, that turns now into brutality and now into pure abstraction, without any issue, without any regard for the emotional world. In one case everything becomes disgusting nonsense, in the other pretentious esotericism.

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[1] Center of the trade in purely commercial church furnishings.

[2] Figs. 189, 200.

The subject is, actually, only a pretext, a means of government, in short a weapon utilized by living mythologies and metaphysics to influence and arouse popular sentiment, and it has strictly no significance from the æsthetic point of view, whose one intense concern is the search for rhythm and harmony. Precisely for this reason the artist becomes truly free when a strong theocratic or political organization succeeds in imposing the subject on him. During those periods when importance was attached exclusively to the subject because it was inseparable from the appearance and spirit of the social edifice, no one spoke of it, no one thought of it. In periods when men say it has no importance they speak of nothing else. In regard to the subject, whatever it may be—pagan myth, Christian or Buddhist legend, Egyptian or Brahmin cosmology—the old artists were like soldiers in the ranks to whom their chief gives real power by relieving them from any choice as to the end to be attained, while leaving them free choice of the means to utilize. The first decorator that arose with a "Mastaba" of the old empire at Sakkara, the creator of the "Caryatides of Cnidos" at Delphi, the sculptor of the frieze of the "Apsaras" at Angkor, the frescoist of the grottos at Ajanta, the image-maker of Moissac, of Autun, of

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[1] Fig. 114.

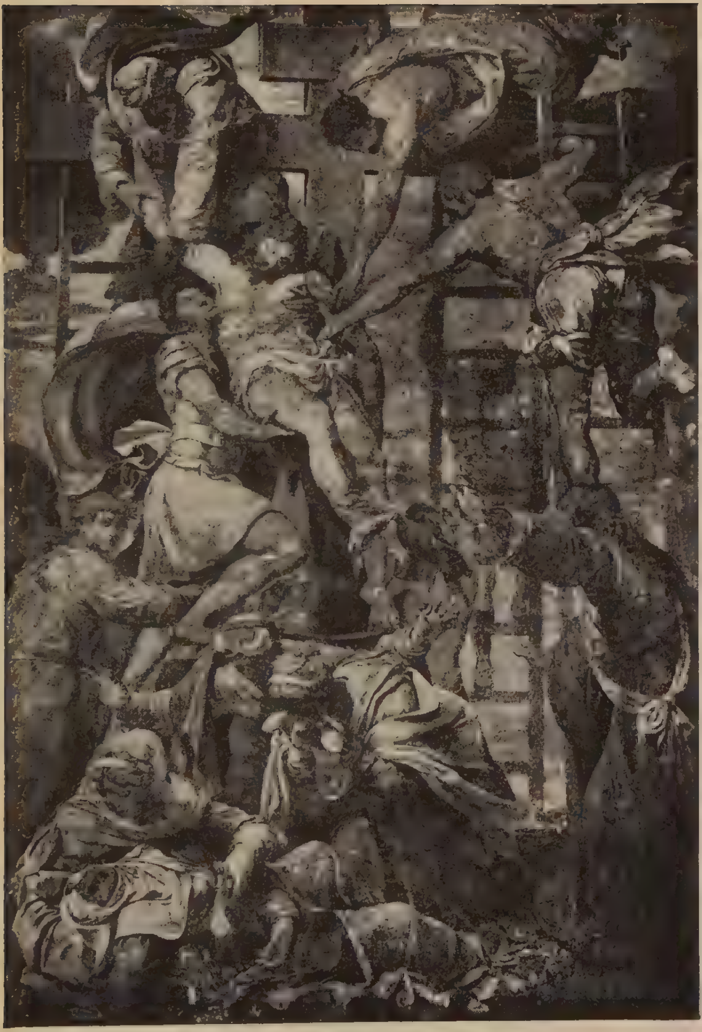

Fig. 154

Composition (Daniele da Volterra)

Chartres, Giotto at Padua or Assisi, all enjoyed this advantage, which Michael Angelo began to lose in the Sistine Chapel but which, thanks to his giant's heart, called forth the peculiar harmony of that work, conquered in despair from the mental torture that rent him.

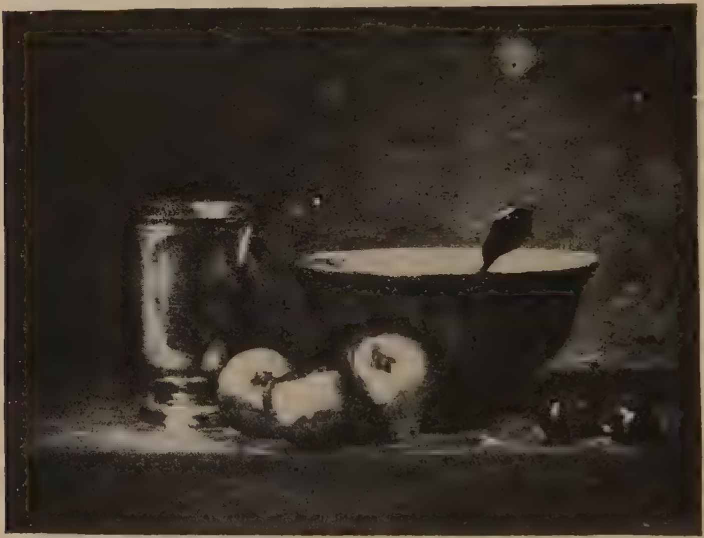

Fig. 155

Comprehension (Chardin)

I refer to that sensation of light-heartedness and victorious peace that obedience gives us when we have neither the means nor the temptation nor even the vaguest idea of contesting the opportunity. Since none of the artists just mentioned was as yet assailed by the political, sentimental, or doctrinaire torment of the search for a "subject," all their united faculties tended to express, with the greatest possible force and simplicity, the form that symbolized in their eyes the subject proposed to them. Obedience means freedom and complete freedom, on condition that he who commands himself obeys the mystic sentiment that entails obedience about and beneath him. As soon as skepticism concerning the ends invoked exists at the top, despair rises from the bottom and disrupts the whole edifice. Neither the beneficence nor the power of art are doubted at that moment, but merely the legitimacy of the subject, and, as to it, first the hesitation and then the ennui of the artisan compromise the power and the beneficence of the art.

It is, then, less puerile but more imprudent to say that the "subject" is without importance, than to imagine that it represents the essence of the work of art of which it is only a pretext, though indeed the main one. The "subject," like money, is only a means of exchange and those who believe in its absolute value recall the misers who believe in that of money. The "subject" of the work of art is, as I have said, its harmony and its rhythm, of which the former no doubt creates unity in space, for our senses, the latter the accord in time with the revolutions of the stars, the cadence of our steps, and the beating of our hearts. The "subject" is only the means of fixing our attention upon appearances and inducing us to penetrate these appearances so as to attain the spirit. But it is this rôle, precisely, that gives the subject its importance and confers upon it perhaps a hierarchical existence which the schools have abased to the point of folly, but which responds, *I think*, to the human value of the illusion that carries us toward it.

It is quite evident that man matters before everything, that the whole work refers first of all to him, always, and to the quality of the emotion that he has been able to transmit to the work of his hands. It is quite evident that two pictures with identical subjects, a Kermess by Rubens and a Kermess by Teniers, derive their importance—the one capital, the other mediocre—entirely from the quality peculiar to the man who conceived each and has or has not had the power to project his emotion at the spectacle into the representation he has given of it. It is even quite evident that a knife painted by Chardin, an apple painted by Cézanne, a flower painted by Renoir, demands a sum of humanity that reduces to nothingness some Crucifixion composed by some master belonging to a school[1] though he had all the learning of a pupil of Michael Angelo or Raphael. Nevertheless, it seems that Rembrandt's "Good Samaritan," Titian's "Adam and Eve," Greco's "Burial of the Count d'Orgaz"[2] are capable of arousing in us a more prolonged echo of humanity than does some still life painted by the same Rembrandt, the same Titian, or the same Greco. I say "it seems," not being altogether sure, for the special quality of each work, even when both are by the same artist, plays the rôle of first importance.

But perhaps a "subject" in which there mingle a thousand echoes of our most remote moral or religious education, of the acts we perform at every moment, of the sentiments and passions that constantly assail us, of the permanent instincts that determine the essential direction of our acts, perhaps such a subject is most certain to move us, even if our æsthetic culture is very advanced and if we are aware that the "subject" is never actually an *event* but rather the *order* which the mind is able to establish between events. Where ability and emotion are equal, perhaps it is a work's degree of complexity that assures its hierarchic rank.

But here again I might be answered that Rembrandt, Titian, or Greco painted a still life with the same complexity of thought or sentiment which they brought into telling us how a warrior, clothed in iron, is carried from the tomb, in the presence of angels, by ascetics whose livid faces are drawn by suffering and prayer, how a wounded man found by the edge of the road is picked up and his wound dressed by a charitable passer-by, and into depicting the splendor of man and woman in the first dawn of the first garden. Unquestionably. Nevertheless, the force and importance of generous sentiments common to all men remain, it seems to me, more essential in the latter case than in the former. Even with the whole weight of their creative force, Michael Angelo or Rembrandt could not modify the inner currents provoked in us, as in themselves, by the centuries of spiritual exaltation which morality, religions, successive philosophies have accumulated about certain sentiments that concern the development and the fate of the whole species. I know very well that a tuft of grass by the edge of a pool has as much plastic value as a Crucifixion, when both have been painted by Rembrandt. But as it has less sentimental value, perhaps there is less chance that we shall succeed in seizing its plastic value by means of sentiment.

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[1] Figs. 95, 154, 155.

[2] Fig. 210.

II

It is this sentimental value, unhappily, that drives creative minds away from the "grand subject," when the reign of the anecdote succeeds the reign of faith, and that impels them to seek the law of continuity and constancy in the relations of color and form—which is the true subject of the work of art—by painting a knife and a glass on a kitchen sink. There any uncertainty is impossible. There can be no question of anything but a plastic structure, raised by its own exaltation beyond good and evil. This spectacle of humility—or of pride, if you will—possesses so great an educative power that, if one knows and wishes to understand it, it can lead to lyrical effusions supremely charged with humanity. A cake decorated with a sprig of laurel, by Chardin, more surely satisfies a mind anxious to taste the emotion of birth or death, than does some canvas by Guido or Barocci that strives to represent one of these events with all possible eloquence.[1] These means which are, I repeat, those of harmony and rhythm, lead such a mind to seek in the first sentimental emotion which it will experience on its way, an impression analogous to that which the canvas by Chardin gives it, and it must necessarily find it, eventually.

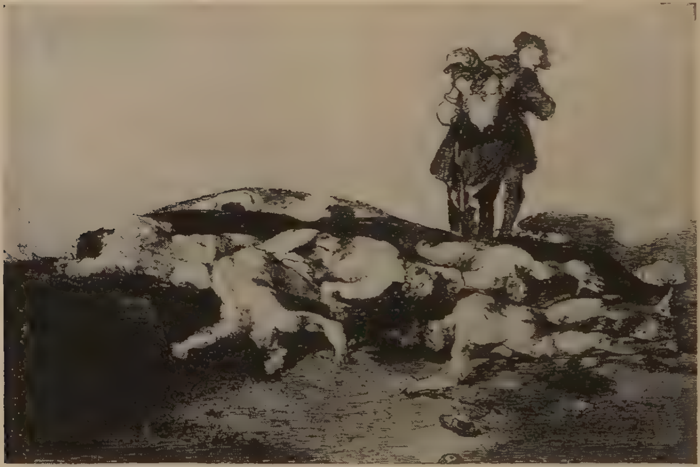

FIG. 156
MASSACRE (Goya)

The most human spectacle does not remain human, does not even really acquire its human value unless it is transmitted to us by methods free from the anecdote that makes us laugh or weep. If indeed the painter and the sculptor are deeply moved by the death of a friend, for instance, or the apparition of a child, or by some famous execution, they reveal it only by a pitiless following out, through purely plastic processes, of the significant prominences that render the scene perceptible, the profiles that define it in space, the receding planes that make this space participate in it, everything that makes it a block of closely united elements, and the secret rhythm that gives it unity in movement. The reward of such an attitude is that any one who gradually reaches this impartial view of the world enters an absolutely pessimistic spiritual region where he only considers death and pain—unless they touch him personally—from the æsthetic point of view. This forces him to regard the image with an intellectual delight that leaves no room for pity.

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[1] Figs. 154, 155.

I once surprised myself wishing that a certain spectacle of war might continue, because of its beauty. And I have realized in this connection why the "Massacre of the Innocents," by Brueghel or Poussin, the "May Second" or the "Massacre" by Goya, the "Massacre of Scio" or the "Medea" by Delacroix, the terrible equestrian effigy that Titian made of "Charles the Fifth," the "Horrors of War," by Rubens, all the Crucifixions by Rembrandt or by the Primitives of Flanders, France, or Italy, the sanguinary idols of the Aztecs, the Hindus, the negroes, the Assyrian bas-reliefs of the chase or of war, so many other works in which carnage or violence are displayed or described, leave only an impression of certitude, calm, lightheartedness, security.[1] The sentimental anecdote is completely effaced and the creator and the spectator breathe an atmosphere of indifference concerning the optimistic ends that man attributes to life, and of definite acceptance of the cruelty of God. I have read,

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[1] Figs. 55, 69, 80, 156, 157, 163, 193.

I do not know where, that Michael Angelo one day pierced with a lance a street-porter in order to study his agony. It is useless to point out the absurdity of the anecdote, if one attempts to make history of it, but if one is willing to consider it as a legend it is useful to emphasize its symbolic truth.

It was while watching, one day, a surgical operation[1] that I surprised the secret of "composition" which confers nobility upon any "subject" and that can assure to the "great subject" its manifest pre-eminence over all others. The group formed by the patient, the surgeon, his aides, and the spectators, appeared to me like a single organism in action. I saw at once that it was impossible it should not be so, since each was at his own task and all united about the same center where the event was taking place, some through their profession, others through their passionate interest in the spectacle, this other because he constituted the chief reason for the event. It was the event itself, the very nature of the event, that determined in every dimension and aspect of the group the positions of the bodies, arms, hands, shoulders, heads, none of which avoided or could avoid its all-powerful influence without weakening, thereby, the harmony and rhythm of this group. The light fell where it was necessary for it to fall for each of the actors to see what he had to do. The disposition of surfaces, the arrangement of planes, the succession of masses, the height or lowness of reliefs was determined by function. An inner functional logic rigorously established a visible structural logic, of which nothing could be modified without the functional logic itself ceasing at once to move toward its end. If a painter had been present, if he had asked the different actors of the drama not to stir so that he could copy the scene, the ensemble would have been disrupted,

[1] Fig. 159.

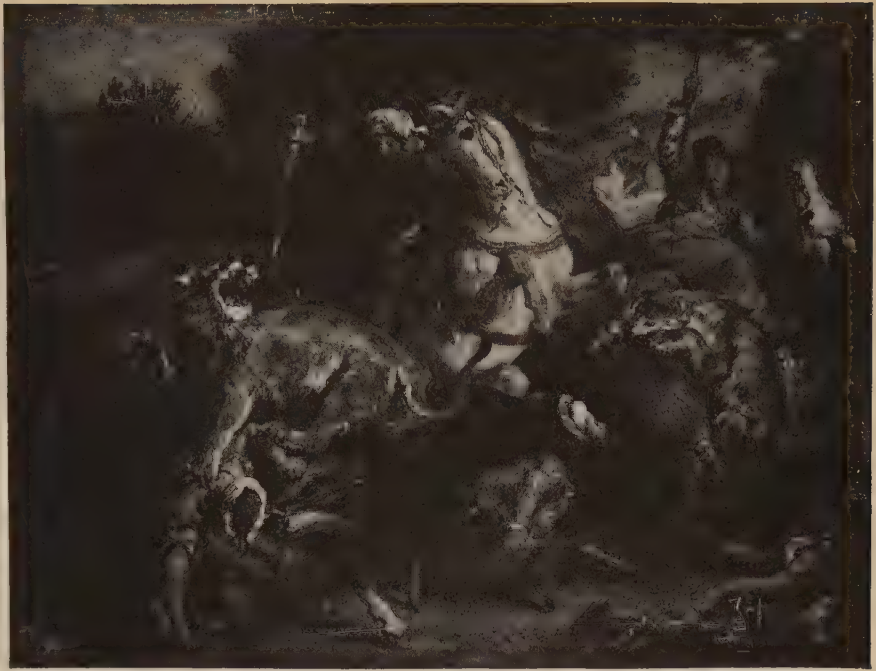

Fig. 157

Plastic Drama (Delacroix)

the organism would have ceased to exist, the emotion would have disappeared with the function itself. The mistake of all schools is to "pose" the scene. Now, even a portrait is not "posed." It is made in the intervals between sittings, when the painter dines, talks, walks with his model, or does not even see him. All the more reason for not "posing" an event that is capable of revealing its plastic unity through the multitude of elements that animate it. Every composition that is not organic has the rigidity, the coldness, the emptiness of death. I am wrong, for death is living. Man, by means of art, has succeeded, as a general rule, in being more dead than death.

In short, the scene has an inner arabesque, of which very few hitherto have suspected the actual existence and of which the "composition" is hardly anything but an unconscious and too merely approximate symbol. It is a complex organism, composed of habitually independent elements, which only a moral force can unite, which only an æsthetic force can render. It can be expressed only with difficulty and, as it were, theoretically, by sculpture. It can merely be evoked by line. Only great symphonic painting which plays as it likes with forms, values, colors, reflections, passages, lights, and shadows, expressing the universe in all its dimensions, can catch for all time its ephemeral but essential life. The room where a woman is giving birth, the care of the infant, his first steps, accident, death, reading, or music enjoyed in common, certain works of industry, agriculture, or war that group men and women about a concentric and profoundly absorbing action, reveal in this way the plastic drama to anyone who knows how to watch them.

The Egyptians had the intuition of the thing, certainly, but they had at their command scarcely anything but the linear convention, cadenced by a social and religious hieratism too severe for them to be able to evoke from its depths and animate with its inner circulation the complex organism that alone can reveal the law of the great composition, in which sentiment and plastic art necessarily fuse. The Greeks, with their concern for anatomical perfection, could scarcely have suspected its existence, as the pediment of Olympia and the *Fates* of Phidias seem to testify clearly.[1] It is not until we reach Giotto,[2] in whom the end of the Mediterranean effort coincided with the blossoming of Christian tenderness, that we see this main and fundamental sentiment being formulated for the first time in a decisive fashion by the intelligence, which unfortunately commanded, as yet, only rudimentary methods and could merely project, unfalteringly, its shadowy outline upon the wall.

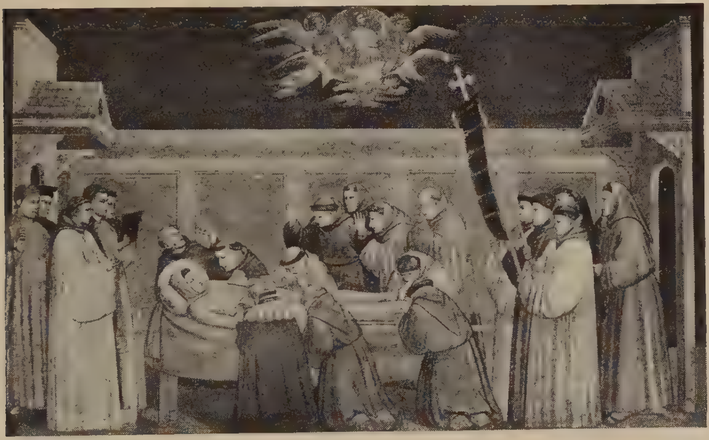

FIG. 158

ORGANIC COMPOSITION (Melody: Giotto)

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[1] Figs. 1, 14.

[2] Figs. 81, 158.

Beyond this the slow labor of clearing away by Masaccio and da Vinci, by Michael Angelo, Raphael, Titian, Tintoretto, and Rubens was necessary so that Rembrandt and Rembrandt alone in painting up to this period, might make the maximum and the totality of his methods converge toward the end to be attained.[1] In him the "subject" is found exactly at the point of equilibrium between the human emotion and the plastic impression, and he grasps this fugitive moment with such power that the whole world—at that instant amalgamated by light and present through all its elements in a few bent shoulders, a few bowed foreheads, a few hands held out toward a tomb or a cradle—seems a single organism operating in the space occupied by this tomb or this cradle. It is the event itself that

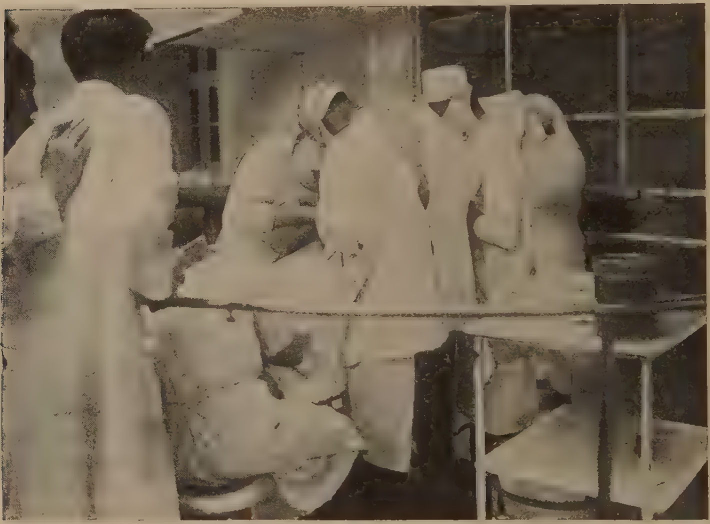

Fig. 159

Natural Organic Composition (Operation)

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[1] Fig. 160.

composes the groups and delegates to the plastic symbol its power of sentiment.

In the instinct of the image-makers of the French cathedral and the Buddhist sculptors of India, especially of Cambodia and Java, there was already appearing an irresistible impulsion toward an organic order analogous to that of Rembrandt.[1] I remarked, apropos of Giotto, that this new and most fruitful conception of a whole is quite evidently a sign of the meeting of the ancient principles of architectonic construction and of Christian sentiment at its height. We know the analogies of Christianity and Buddhism. They were to pursue one another, for the sake of our spiritual unity, as far as the form which visual emotion assumes in the secret heart.

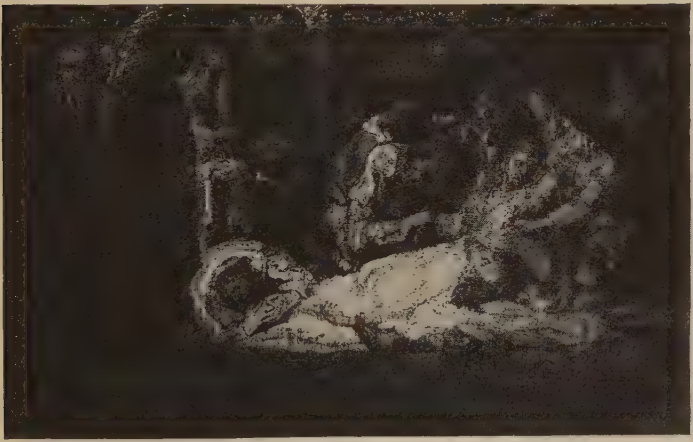

Fig. 160

Organic Composition (Symphony: Rembrandt)

All this is very simple at bottom. It is never our business to invent episodes but to combine with sobriety and express with power the order according to which every event appears to us. This is done I feel sure, by all born creators. Rembrandt takes most of his "subjects" from scripture. Michael Angelo also. Villon, Pascal, Baudelaire seem almost incapable of inventing episodes, a privilege belonging almost always to the inferior Romanesque or dramatic literature. Shakespeare, himself, has recourse to history, like the Greek or French tragic poets, like the Jewish lyricists. Can we say that all these lacked imagination? Except for Rembrandt and Rubens, do we know a painter endowed with an imagination more grandiose than Tintoretto's? Yet he borrowed from Titian or Michael Angelo most of his "subjects." On the basis of his immediate emotions, the genuine creator combines the episodes which his traditional deity or habit celebrate more simply. Nor is the event the real point of departure. It is the immediate emotion aroused by the nude woman, by birth, death, man at his work, and the relations of all these things to light, space, and the agitation of man's heart. Does it suffice, then, to copy? No doubt. But it is necessary to know how to copy. To know how to copy is to know how to summarize, simplify, choose, accentuate. To copy is to disengage from a chaos of confused sensations the significant points to which emotion is attached and which are united by thought through passages subtle enough to allow only these peaks to emerge, while clearly showing their lasting relationships.

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[1] Figs. 15, 97, 136.

III

We cannot really judge of these questions save in the hours when some great common sentiment sweeps an entire crowd, already prepared by collective, secular education, toward the material symbols of the image to be realized. If this sentiment and this education are

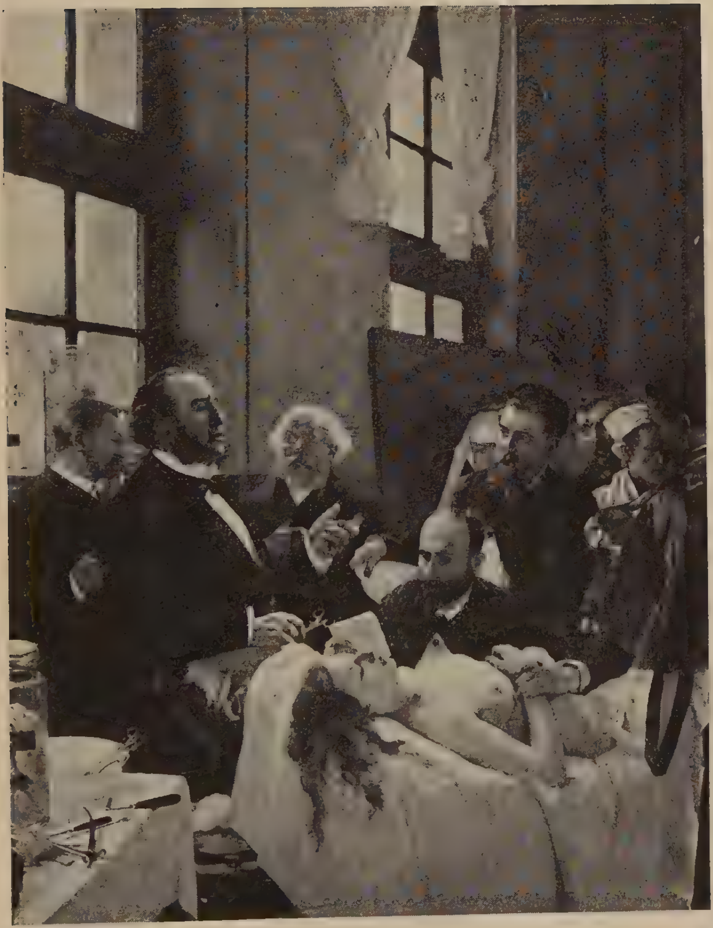

Fig. 161

Naturalistic Composition (Gervex)

lacking, it is necessary for the individual—by a sort of miracle, as if he had been divinely chosen—to possess them himself and, while tracing them to their natural sources, to have sufficient cruelty toward himself to keep watch over his sentimental emotions through his æsthetic emotions, and his æsthetic emotions through his sentimental emotions in a reciprocal and continuous exchange. The artistic education is the most arduous of all, for it consists neither in registering nor classifying nor expounding facts. The only means toward such an education, the only authority as to its value lies in the sensibility of master and pupil, and sensibility—since it admits no instrument of measurement—will not suffer any standard of choice to be imposed upon it.

Plastic art is, of all arts, the least understood and the least easy to understand. Through the ear we receive the opinions of others, which demands virtually no personal effort. Through the eye we are forced to form one for ourselves. Which is why we do not choose to believe in the education of the eye but recoil from it instinctively, because it demands a personal effort of which few of us are capable. We willingly admit that algebra or music necessitate a preliminary initiation, because they express themselves with the aid of rigidly conventional symbolic signs and present an infinity of possible combinations. But as soon as we are able to distinguish an elephant from an umbrella we regard the education of the eye as completed. From that moment we plunge headlong into uncontrolled sentiment, which the painting or the statue is henceforth reduced to the servile rôle of exalting, and which the most puerile symbolism—precisely that which is content with distinguishing an elephant from an umbrella—suffices to express.

Everybody, or almost everybody, knows that the word, or in any case the sound, only indirectly represents the object, which gives the poet and especially the musician unbounded liberty. Everybody, or almost everybody, believes that the image is the object and declares himself satisfied if the object is recognizable. No one, or almost no one suspects that the permanent

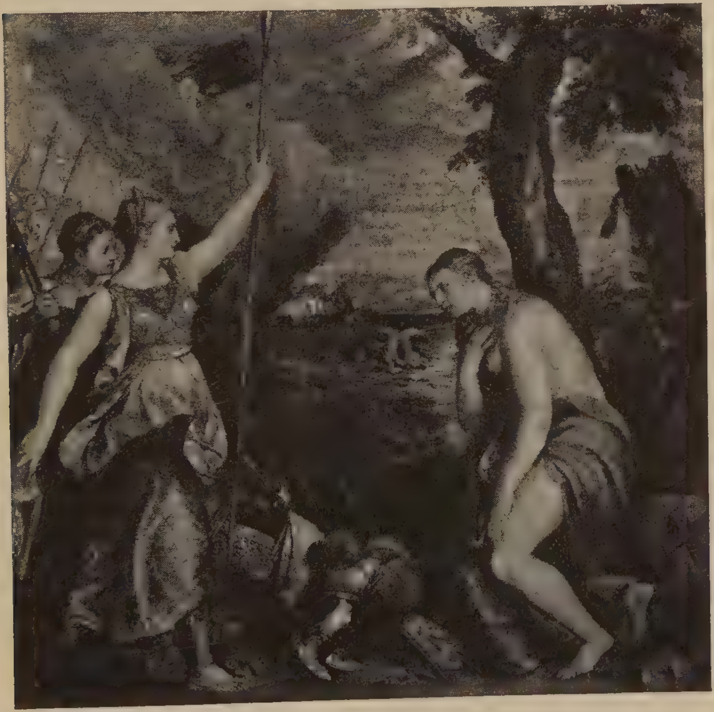

Fig. 162

The Conquest of Youth (Titian, at 95 years of age)

need of checking up the world of imagery by the real world demands an incessant effort that permits no faltering; almost no one suspects that sculpture, and especially painting, stand at a particularly unstable point of equilibrium between the subject and the object. Those who would be incapable of learning this language

—the most intellectual of all—decide at once that it is unintelligible. Those who would be capable of learning, decide that it is the least intellectual of tongues and reserved for a few persons whose visual endowment is no doubt estimable but insufficient to educate and ripen the mind. No one has asked himself why, for example, the period of finest production is so different in the different arts. For the musician and especially for the writer it almost always lies between the fortieth and fiftieth years; the education of the brain by the eye being slow, arduous, unceasing, and indebted to nothing outside itself, almost all the great masters of painting have produced their finest works after their fiftieth year and, when they have lived to be very old, have not ceased to reveal their steady rise in freedom and strength up to the end. I am thinking, in the matter of the great painters, of Veronese, Rubens, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Poussin, Delacroix, Cézanne and, in the matter of those who have lived to be very old, of Cranach, Frans Hals, Goya, Hokusai, and of the sublime examples of Titian[1] and Renoir.[2] The plastic education, more than any other, appeals only to those

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[1] When I wished to choose a picture from the old age of Titian to bear out this text, I found myself confronted by a singular difficulty. Having resolved to give here only such illustrations as had not appeared in the four preceding volumes of this *History of Art*, I discovered that the paintings of Titian which illustrate them and which I had assembled at that time without taking into consideration their chronological order and relying solely on my preferences, had all been painted after the master's sixtieth year: the Doge "Gritti" at 64, "Paul III" at 69, "Salome" at 74, "Diana at the Bath" at 83, the "Education of Aurora" towards 90, the "Nymph and the Shepherd" and "Original Sin" toward 92, the portrait of "Titian" between 90 and 95, the "Christ Insulted" toward 94. It is one of the nudes mentioned above that I should have liked to reproduce to show what radiant spiritual youth the master possessed at the approach of his hundredth year. In default of them I have chosen the resplendent canvas at the Prado which he began to paint toward the age of 90 and did not finish, perhaps, until he was 98.

[2] Figs. 105 A, 162, 212.

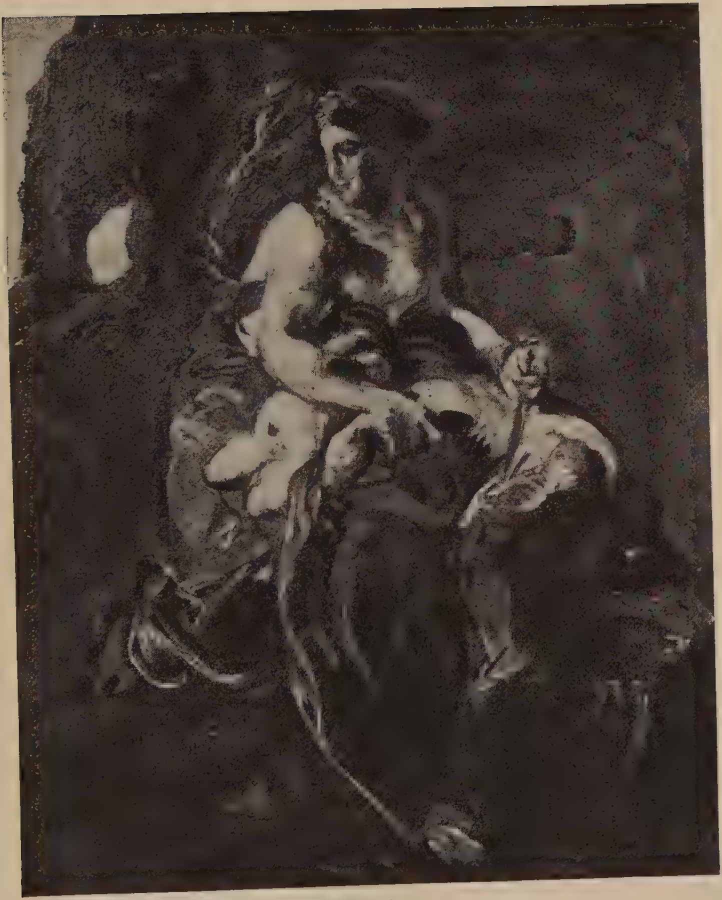

Fig. 163

Subordination of Detail to Movement (Delacroix) who wish to acquire it not as the result of fashion or pedantry, but through passion.

Everything changes after we have pondered the words of Spinoza: "The ideas that we have of exterior bodies indicate rather the constitution of our own body than the nature of exterior bodies," and when, on the other hand, we realize that painting, almost to the same degree as algebra or musical notation, is a language the conventional elements of which can group themselves according to infinite combinations that have no other object than to display a formal and colored harmony tending to recreate the unity of space, and of a formal and colored rhythm tending to recreate the continuity of movement. Innate and universal competence then seems laughable, esotericism irritating, humility necessary. I remember the time when I regarded Egyptian work as that of infants, the Chinese as monkeys, the Dravidians as madmen. The period is not so far away when I considered the Toltecs as monsters, and the negro artists as gorillas. Yet among them were forms, evolved long before, which I could view from a wide and distant perspective and which, by means of education and atavism, might have formed part of the normal necessity of my usual vision.

It is all a matter of convention, not even of universal convention, and one must know the signs of it according to the period and the place. How should a man without culture conceive the forms to be born, how should he understand even the forms that were being born, when ancient forms escape so often the understanding of the most cultivated man? I have heard it said that the Chinese, who belong to a superior civilization, have absolutely no understanding of what a European painting represents—a portrait, for instance—and are quite ready to look at it upside down. And I imagine that the day when Paolo Uccello introduced perspective into his works, although devised by him to approach reality as closely as possible, the spectators, accustomed to the conventions of the school of Giotto, found his works wholly unintelligible.[1]

It is necessary to learn. Even, perhaps especially, to learn that the same language can express different periods, different ideas, different characters, independently moreover, of its own nature. Not only Racine and Baudelaire, but Racine and Vaugelas, Baudelaire and my coal-dealer use the same words. People consider Michelet and Victor Duruy as historians because they make use of similar materials. Nevertheless, Jean-Paul Laurens, although he speaks the same language as Delacroix, is closer to Victor Duruy than to Delacroix, and Delacroix would agree better with Michelet, though speaking another language, than Michelet would agree with Victor Duruy.

"Painting is a matter of the mind," said da Vinci. We must realize this if we wish to restore its dignity by wresting it from the Bœotians. But we must also realize that it is a matter of poetry as well, and not suppose that two men who express themselves by painting are both painters because of that. There are grammarians of painting who are no more painters than the grammarians of language are writers. My coal-dealer speaks French, but Baudelaire is a poet in French. Cabanel expresses himself in painting, but Renoir is a poet in painting. We move "through forests of symbols," certainly. Here, again, we must realize that some of these symbols, alike at first sight, conceal a different spirit, and that some others, dissimilar at first sight, mask the same spirit. There is less distance between Homer and Corot, who are separated by nearly three thousand years, and who express themselves through signs that have no analogy, than between

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[1] Fig. 141.

Corot and some illustrious professor of painting who lives in the same epoch and uses similar signs.

Granting this, and that we are familiar with the convention that pretends to enclose the world, whether in the rigid or sinuous play of lines on a plane, or in the animated reliefs of volumes on an irregular surface, or in an entirely detached form imitating the real form, whether one accepts Egyptian symbolism, Hindu symbolism, Greek symbolism, whether one consents to more conventional representation still, in which the linear arabesque, the flat tone, the introduction of values and half-tones reproduce at will all the preceding effects augmented by the immense melodic and symphonic resource of color, it remains for us to penetrate the very spirit of the work, that is to say its quality. This is a less arduous task than the first, since all language bears in itself a secret harmony that is proper to it and that is not clearly evident unless it unites with the spiritual harmony of man by passages so subtle that both fuse in an irresistible unity. But for that very reason this quality is less easy to define; and, in the last analysis, it need render account to nothing save to the sentiment of the individual.

Anatomical rendering is only one more convention, and perhaps more dangerous than any other since Occidental art, thanks to it, has almost been engulfed in the search for physical perfection, while Oriental art, which gave no thought to it, penetrated as a matter of course, through its constant symbolism, into the empire of ideas. Without discussing anatomical rendering any further, therefore, we may say that line, mass, and color derive their accepted meaning from the mind alone and that none of them has the right to pretend to be closer to reality than the others, even if we admit that art endeavors to render reality. Neither line nor mass nor color exists by itself. Once their form of ex-

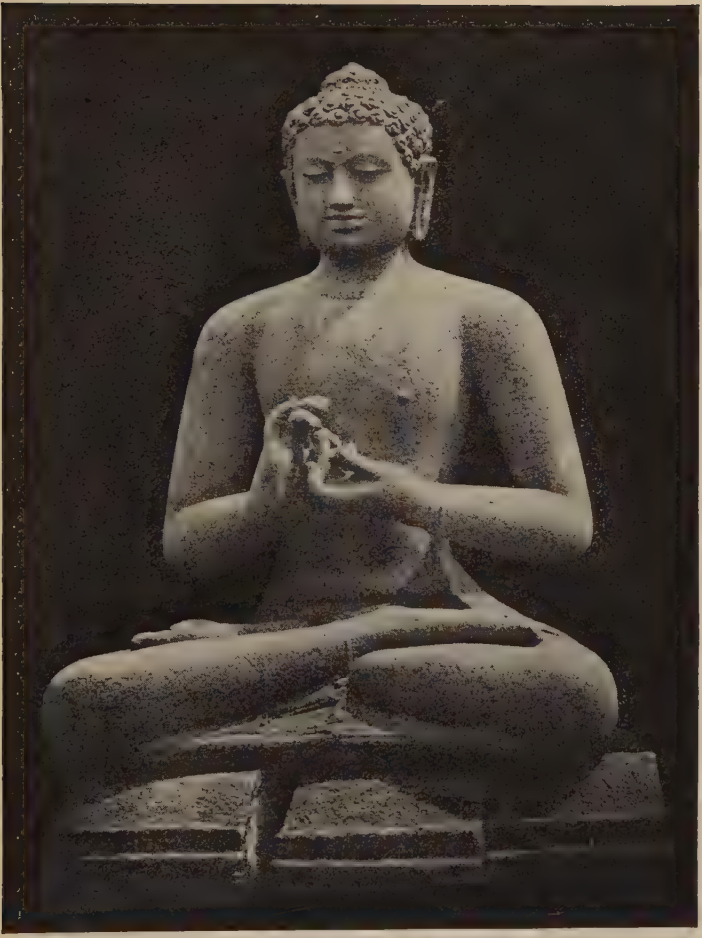

Fig. 164

Subordination of Detail to Form (Java)

pression is fixed, all are functions of that inner force which springs from the enthusiasm of an artistic multitude at work or from a solitary poet. None of the methods created to symbolize form have reality save through their spiritual relations with the expression of an idea, the ensemble of which lies entirely in the intention of the creator.

It is this ensemble that we must first seek to understand. The surgical operation, mentioned above, revealed to me in a flash the supremely important and almost unique rôle which this ensemble plays, and at the same time the means we must use to succeed in expressing it. Not a detail, no matter how insignificant in appearance, but depends upon it and is determined by its essential function, as the form of the humblest organ is determined by the function of an organism of which it is only a part. Detail does harm if it is not indispensable to the radiance of the ensemble. The ensemble does not radiate unless it forms a whole from which nothing can be taken away. The narrow gleam of the knife in the "Medea"[1] of Delacroix assumes a tragic significance because the entire movement of the drama, the terrible face that looks back, the flying hair, the torso swollen with anger, the arms clasped about the limp children, all converge in the gleam of the knife through the play of the lines. The woods would seem less deep in the Fête Champêtre,[2] and the green shadow that floats between the black trunks less mysterious if Watteau had not accentuated the silence and the peaceful seclusion by this rose in the ivy, this crimson ribbon against the gray satin of a corsage.

I remember, in a certain "Emtombment" by Rembrandt, an almost imperceptible blue stripe that runs across Christ's shroud. What is the meaning of this almost gay note in the greatest drama of history? One does not see it unless one analyzes the picture: only the ensemble appears at first, the weight of the corpse in the arms of friends, the sorrow of the women, the bleeding wounds, and the inertia of the god. It does not force itself upon one. But the moment one sees it one knows why the flesh of Christ is so livid, why this odor of the sepulcher floats over all these suspicious whitenesses, why this almost inaudible cry of the flute introduces into the wail of the oboes and the violoncellos as it were a faint recollection of the joys of the world that renders everything more hopeless. In a portrait of a woman by Goya it is impossible to see anything but a mouth where the blood beats above glistening teeth, nothing but flaming eyes, warm arms, a few flowers or sparkling jewels here and there, because there is nothing

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[1] Fig. 163.

[2] Fig. 57.

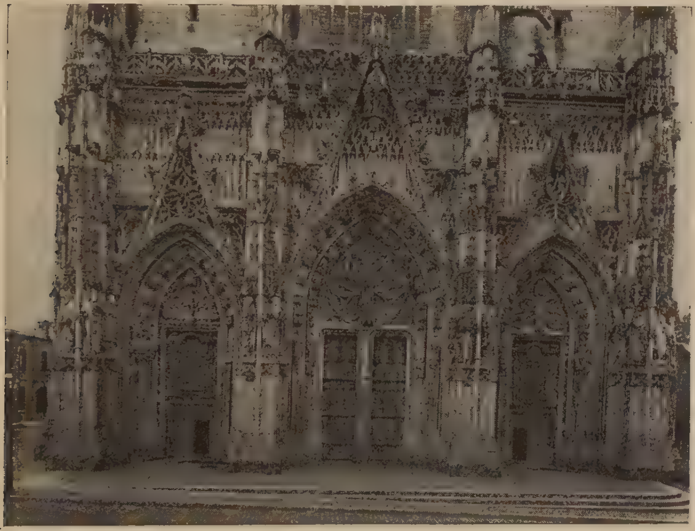

Fig. 165
Tyranny of Detail (Abbeville)

else and all this is necessary to express and suffices to express the image of her vicious beauty. I know a Javanese Buddha,[1] smooth and naked, in which the surfaces slide into one another like pure, unrippled water, a sort of block of uniform light, the whole of whose single wave ends in two mannered and charming hands, well cared-for, pulpy, full of creases and hiding-places like flowers. The curve of a hand, caught by chance in the *apsaras* of Angkor, is prolonged,[2] through the serpentine quality of the torso down to the foot of the dancer because nothing superfluous intervenes, neither a misplaced trinket nor an excessive muscular protuberance, to break the continuous wave that unites them and is repeated the whole length of the frieze in invisible echoes.

We should look at a picture or a statue as we look at a monument, not in regard to some carved leaf but in regard to the structural logic that determines its posture and indicates its functions. This logic itself will lead the eyes back over the carved leaf so that we can admire its very veinings. The absence of this logic would explain why the leaf, lost in the enormous edifice, would be enough in itself to arouse our distaste. An error does not shock in a harmonious ensemble. In an inharmonious ensemble we see only errors, even if not everything is error. Suppose a man stood at Chantilly, between the modern château and the outbuildings of the old château. I should ask him to look first at one building and then at the other. If he did not yet understand I should ask that after having taken a long look at the church of Brou, or even at the church of Abbeville, or even the Cathedral of Rheims, in which there are so many splendidly attractive details, he should turn to the Palace of the Popes at Avignon.[3]

[1] Fig. 164. [2] Fig. 136.
[3] Figs. 125, 165.

IV

The ornamental profusion of architectures in a state of degeneration corresponds, in the picture, to sacrificing an ensemble which its painter shows himself, by this very fact, incapable of conceiving, to useless anecdotal or picturesque details. Nevertheless, this profusion acquires a singular savor in the Primitives who employ it—I mean especially the Primitives of Germany or Flanders, for the Italian manifests an admirable plastic intelligence from the outset of painting. It is because in the German or Flemish Primitive this profusion does not rise from a desire to dazzle the spectator by a false science, a servile virtuosity, the display of an erudition as inordinate as it is hollow, but from a candid scrupulousness not to forget anything he knows or feels. What saves him is the freshness of what he feels and the naïveté with which he recounts what he knows. The ensemble, which has, in him as in most fully developed masters, a profound spiritual existence, is not given its unique value, as in the case of the latter, through plastic processes that subordinate the emotion experi-

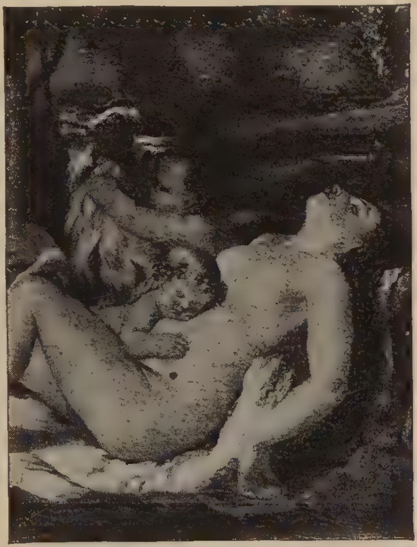
Fig. 166
Assimilation (Poussin)

enced to the consciousness of this emotion and to the means of expressing it provided by the intelligence. The emotion experienced, which has been aroused by sentiment, is expressed precisely by the accumulation of everything that can help to render the fervor of this sentiment. If detail dominates here, it never harms the ensemble, which is itself nothing but an accumulation of details arranged as well as possible about a single emotion that confusedly floods them with its power.

So, while in him who attains the peaks of painting the equilibrium is realized between instinct and reason, it is broken in the decadent, who does not even suspect it and gropes his way blindly, with the tip of his Academic sword, in an anarchic universe. In the Primitive this equilibrium strives to be realized, and the work derives its touching character from the very passion of this striving. At first the beginning of love, then its full possession, finally its dissolution in the disgust and lassitude of the act. Compare from this point of view Gentile da Fabriano, Raphael and Barocci, or, to choose three names in a single school, Carpaccio, Titian, Bassano. And you will appreciate what distinguishes detail envisaged as a logical function of the whole. In one case the detail and the whole both subordinate themselves to their function as regards sentiment, in the other the detail and the whole are both deprived of logic and sentiment.

In the latter case you will get a perfect example of academic procedure, which the young Rembrandt still utilized in the "Lesson in Anatomy" at the Hague,[1] and which he suddenly renounced, having achieved success and fortune, to watch men toiling, agonizing, dying in the dwellings of the poor quarters, women toiling, weeping, giving birth to children, and to watch children being born or playing. The School substitutes

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[1] Fig. 102.

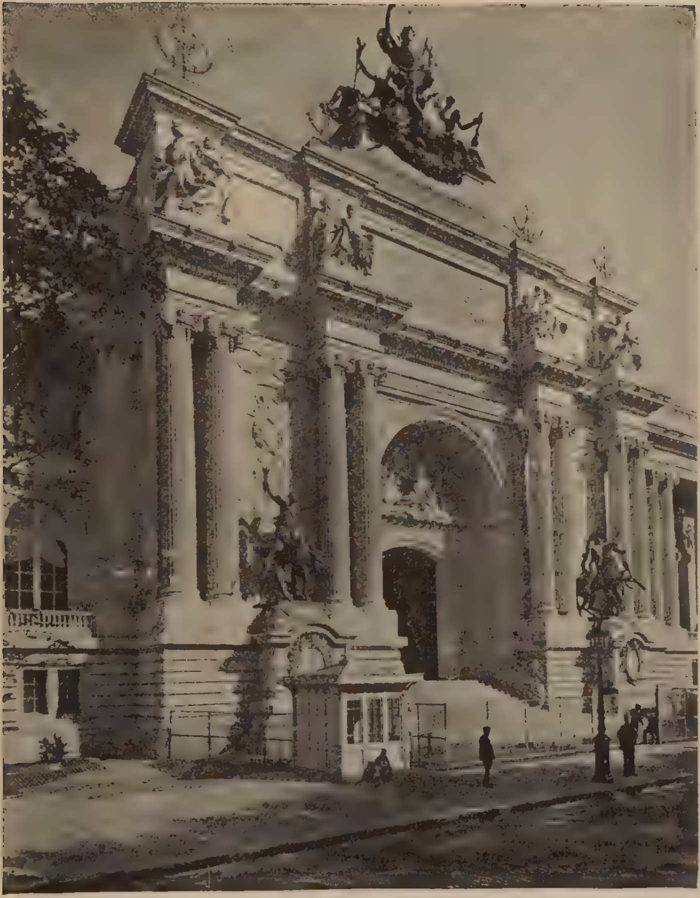

Fig. 167

The Cage

for the organic conception of the masters, which it is incapable of comprehending, what it calls "composition," a collection of recipes borrowed from the exterior aspect of their works, from the grouping of objects and figures whose concentric arrangement it seizes but of which the human source is absolutely inaccessible to it. It is, however, simple to grasp it; simpler, indeed, than to discover rhythmic formulas. It is simpler to contemplate a living spectacle from the standpoint of one's own personality than to attempt to render this spectacle from the standpoint of the so-called arrangement shown by a canvas of Raphael, Titian, Rubens, or Poussin. It is a matter of suffering, feeling, loving, of comparing one's love, one's sensations, and one's suffering with the impressions one receives of the visible world and binding them together with lines of force that compel the form and the heart to agree. The mysterious thing is that this ability should be granted to very few men. Almost all serve up again in their "Model Resting" the polygons and pyramids that they have taken bodily, with a tracing, from the "Mass of Bolsena" or the "Transfiguration."

Does this mean that tradition does not exist in forms of art springing from the same people, that technique cannot be transmitted, perfecting itself from age to age, that the craft of the architect, the sculptor, or the painter cannot be taught? It is so far from meaning this that I believe, quite on the contrary, the tradition of the great artistic civilizations is strictly bound to the progressive discovery and the joyous conquest of the organic character of art. The tradition is born, grows, gathers strength, ripens, wanes, and dies at the same time that the spiritual life of a people is born, grows, gathers strength, ripens, wanes, and dies. Men of the same craft, speaking the same tongue, working in the same shop, the same atelier under the orders of the same master, use the same tools, grind the same colors, handle the same substances, spread over the same stones the same layer of plaster to fix the painting there by the same processes, jointing the same scaffolding made with the same wood according to the same principles with the same ropes and the same nails.

The instrument plays a human rôle in the formation of the artist. It shapes his hand. It attacks the material, different according to the place and the period, with an iron more or less strong, more or less sharp, more or less hard. Geological shapes and the quality of the light intervene every instant, during several generations to orient the master and his disciples toward a fashion of seeing that gradually modifies their fashion of feeling and being. This is well known in the case of language itself which fashions little by little the form of reasoning. A man, no matter how great, does not run away from his craft, his guild, his race, and the impulsions which they give him without running away, at the same time, from the universality of mankind which this craft, this guild, this race have helped to model; it is they which transmit to men the secrets, sentiments, and ideas that have come down from other times. And this is so true that the greatest return to the real traditions that are disregarded or falsified by the School most of the time.

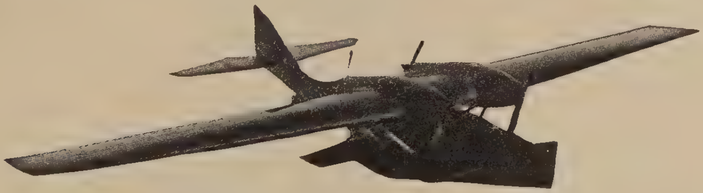

Fig. 168

The Bird

This was the rôle of Rubens, restoring the painting of his country to its Flemish sources against the Romanizers of Flanders, after having, according to the counsels of those same Romanizers, studied the Italians but understood them better than they. It is the rôle of Poussin, accomplishing in Italy the same task for France. It is that of Delacroix re-establishing, amid the outcries of the Academy professors, the great animated form of an organic movement against a tradition that had been led astray by the pupils of David. It is that of Cézanne leading Impressionism back to the monumental approach to a three-dimensional world when the painters had lost themselves in the dance of atoms and of floating reflections. The appearance of the heroic individual has always marked the break with an old, worn rhythm that is out of breath, out of touch with its sources, and the introduction of a young rhythm in the traditional settings. These consist, everywhere, of the national character, the teachings of the historical and geographical surroundings, the social and ideological evolution that has circulated subterraneously in the soul of the last generations, and the will to maintain the mind at the level of the rising flood of life so as to understand it and, in case of need, master it. It is these things that a master worthy of his name teaches his pupils.

The strictness of the tradition, which enslaves and perverts the weak, will never prevent the strong from revivifying its spirit from time to time through the revolutionary intervention of the very power that animates them and which they add to the age-old edifice like a spire or a tower. What always revolts the herd is that, since the organ changes its function before changing its form, it is never aware that the function has been changed and that the new form, which is the poet himself, is precisely the announcer of the new function. The traditional creator, the poet, is not the

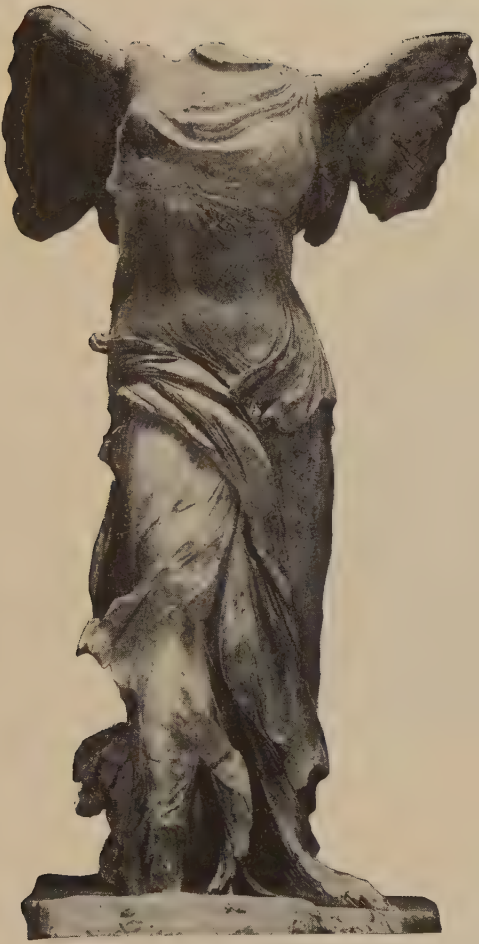

Fig. 169

Life (Greece)

professor who employs his most skillful recipes in constructing a Greco-Renaissance palace to the glory of all the arts; he is the engineer who exhibits an airplane in the hall of that palace.

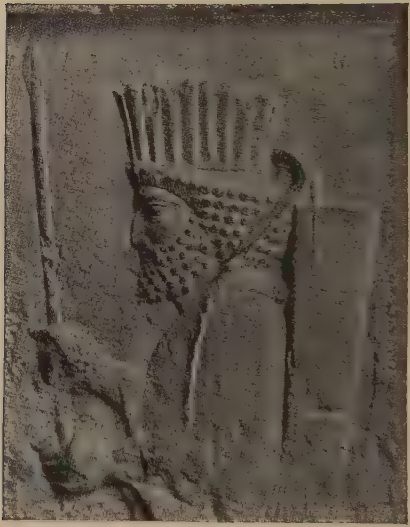

FIG. 170
STYLE (Persia)

The palace has no style, the airplane has. That is the whole matter. Tradition, even if it appears in the form of revolution, has for its object to maintain and re-establish style in the expressive forms of an epoch, a people, a function, or a man. That is to say that it is a structure taken from life and returning to life after passing through the mind; it is a structure whose unity in space and continuity in time restore to the man, to the function, to the people, to the epoch in question their universal appearance and significance. He who wishes to defend the School can furnish only one argument of any value. The task of the School is, perhaps, to outline faintly in time the arabesque which the masters traced yesterday or will trace tomorrow in space. In this way it may manifest, according to its modest means, the continuity of our effort between the great moments of our spiritual life, since they are separated by critical periods in which all rhythms are lost. For example, perhaps without the school of

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[1] Figs. 167, 168.

Bologna we should not have had the French seventeenth or eighteenth century, or even the nineteenth.

The unfortunate thing is that there is nothing alive in this arabesque, that it deviates very quickly from its path to end in those miserable recipes against which the strong man finally protests. Acting inversely to the great tradition that gradually introduces style into life, he suddenly reintroduces life into style, and causes the fragile framework set up by the schools to crack on all sides. This raises up against him all the routine-loving professionals and the multitude behind them. It was the masters who in the course of history have given us our habitual attitudes of mind. When they themselves discard them we do not forgive them the effort to which they force us in order to understand them, even when we do not have to follow them. And this is so true that once we are habituated, and habituated by them, to their own style we do not permit them to develop its possibilities, to go further or elsewhere. We have seen this in our day with Renoir, for instance, whose first works were gravely pointed out to him by purists as a reproach for producing others that do not resemble them. A sentiment of incontestable honesty, but completely comic.

In short, there is a cause for these alternations of tradition and revolution that strikes us in the development of a great epoch of art in which several generations participate. It appears in two things: first comes the establishing of an organic equilibrium between the life that flows through the emotions of man and the style according to which his period, his race, and his own nature urge him to express it; on the other hand, there is the rupture of this equilibrium due to the decrepitude of the period or the race or to the sudden or violent introduction of elements foreign to the period and the race which the mass of artists have lost the power to assimilate. Life is all discovery, color, movement, expansion, conquest. Style is all hierarchy, prohibition, subordination.

Certain quite living things, like the "Victory of Samothrace," are almost without style. Certain highly stylized things, like the "Archers of Persepolis" are almost without life. Others, like the "Charioteer of Delphi," carry the union of style and life to the highest peak of their power of expression.[1] In cases when both fuse, as at the end of the old empire of Memphis or the Theban Middle Empire, as in the Greek sixth and fifth centuries, as in the French twelfth, thirteenth, and seventeenth centuries, as in the time of the Grottos of Ellora in India, of the palaces of Angkor in Cambodia, of the Temple of Boroboudour in Java, as in the period

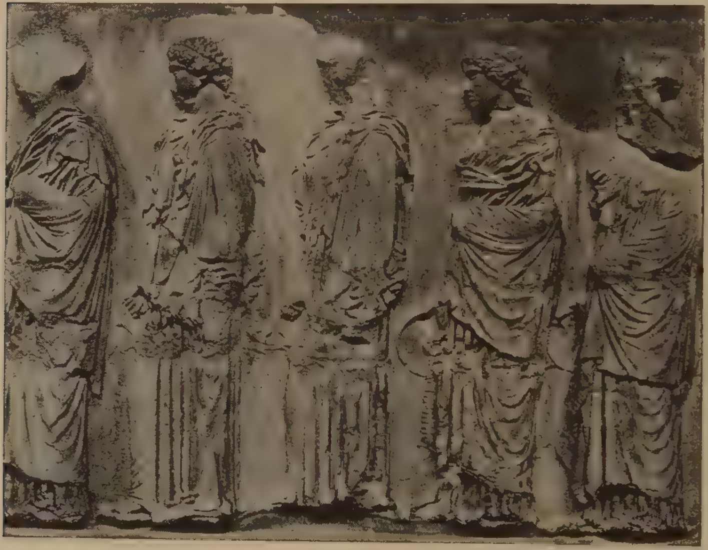

Fig. 171

Panathenaic Procession (Greek Art)

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[1] Figs. 12, 169, 170.

of T'ang in China, a prodigious hour of the human soul strikes in which its power of love, reaching an apogee, arrange themselves spontaneously according to its maximum of will-power. When style preponderates the reign of dogma comes quickly, giving the illusion of capturing life, impressive at first but speedily tyrannical, sterile, and soon deadly. When life is in the ascendant and gives the illusion that it will not burn out, there comes a state of chaos that is intoxicating for those who feel it, but anarchic and exhausting if it does not lead to a new equilibrium, thanks to the action of some great individual or some ardent group of individuals.

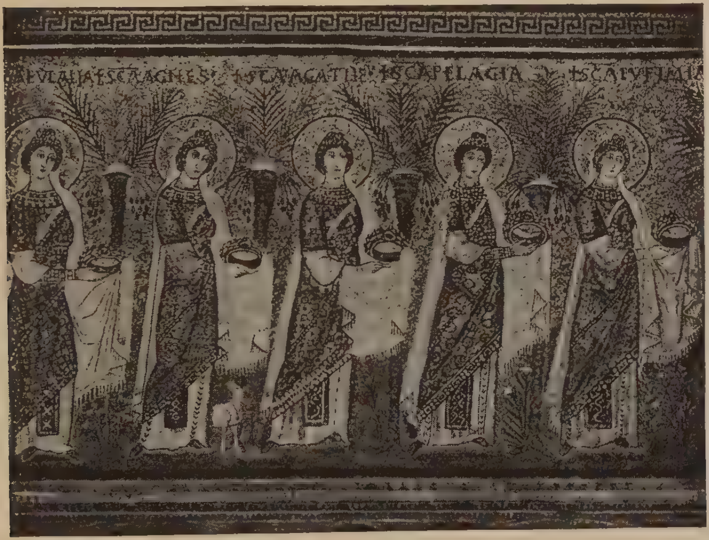
EVLALIA SCA AGNES SCA AGATHE SCA PELAGIA SCA EVFIMIA

Fig. 172

Panathenaic Procession (Byzantine Art)

There are a hundred examples of these alternative rhythms; for example: the Egyptian style of the new empire that ended in a monotonous academicism from which, at the *Saïte* epoch, the artists of the Nile tore themselves away to recover, though indeed in frailer forms, the musical undulation of surfaces that had characterized the works of their ancestors ten centuries before;[1] the Greek style, from which the life of the Hellenistic world escaped in an increasing disorder to end, through the assimilation of a thousand foreign contributions, in the Byzantine style where one finds again the essential elements of the eurythmic preoccupations that prevailed among the forerunners of Phidias;[2] the Buddhist style, born of a moral reaction against Brahmanism and recovering the sensual orgy of Brahmanism at the end of its road, through the artists of Cambodia and Java, whose carving makes us sense the very perfume of flowers, the murmur of trees, the ripple of water;[3] the French ogival style, definitely shattered by the formidable upheaval caused in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by their fierce conquest of liberty of sensation and of criticism, but reappearing—for those who have eyes and according to its own essential rhythms that date from the period of the primitive cathedrals—in the symmetrical arrangement of the chateau of Hardouin Mansart.

One could go much farther in the demonstration of this constancy of the same style through ages agitated by political institutions and by the successive erection and destruction of the national power in the material and moral order. In some French factory of today we see again the general appearance of the palaces of Louis XIV. In some Italian automobile or ship we recognize the trenchant manner of the architects of Siena[4] or Florence five or six hundred years ago. The megalomania of the Roman style has not varied, from the Cyclopean works of the Etruscans to those of the engineers of our day, including the builders of the Coliseum, including Michael Angelo and the palace architects during the two centuries that preceded the revolution. We can go even farther back and compare, for example, the style of the English and French cathedrals of the thirteenth century with the style of the immemorial raised stones of insular Britain and continental Brittany; in the latter case we have animation and delightful irregularity of surfaces and profiles, and in the former their straight lines, their coldness, their rigidity.

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[1] Figs. 32, 173.

[2] Figs. 171, 172.

[3] Figs. 91, 97, 136, 188, 202.

[4] Figs. 71, 79.

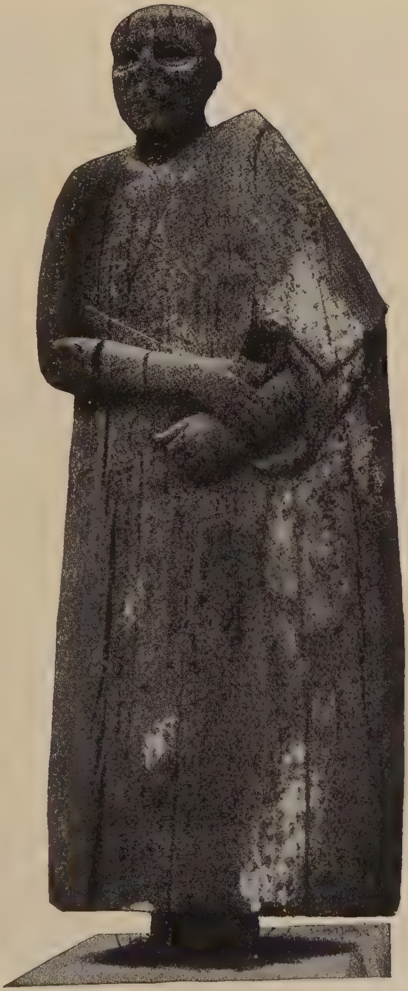

Fig. 173

Persistence of the Architectonic Rhythm

(Egypt, Saïte Period)

Style can only be defined through the constancy of its relations with the country and the race, the age-old effort of which goes occasionally so far as to create forms so remote from their living original that it is scarcely recognizable and remains unknown to the creator himself, or rather to the executant, to the tapestry-worker, potter, cabinet maker, or decorator. Stylization is nothing but the schematic systemization of a style. It is repugnant to Europe in general—if one excepts furniture, pottery, jewelry, and architecture which is after all the most noble form of stylization—but Egyptian antiquity and Asia have extended it to all manifestations of art, from the humblest to the most grandiose. It is the anonymous, obscure work of ten, twenty, a hundred generations of workmen bent upon their task of conserving every member which makes up the symbolic framework of the initial emotion. We find it in the ensemble of the monument as well as in its slightest details. Sometimes, as with the Arab decorators, it reaches pure geometry, but more often, fortunately, it turns to the motionless rhythmic dance of ornamental motifs tending to symmetry, such as we find in Byzantine or Romanesque, Peruvian or Polynesian decoration, or again it attains that inexhaustible freedom in the arrangement of the schematized form in which Japanese artisans are past masters. In their case, everything is dominated by the race-factor which leads, in religion and politics, to obedience to a law that has been accepted once for all, because it is recognized as favorable to the development of the social type.

What gives Europe its special characteristic, in the lyrical as well as in the moral field, is that the individual appears to rescue it from that somnolence into which the monotonous repetition of the same rhythm invincibly bears it. Between life that rebels at being dammed in and the dam itself, giving to life its peculiar

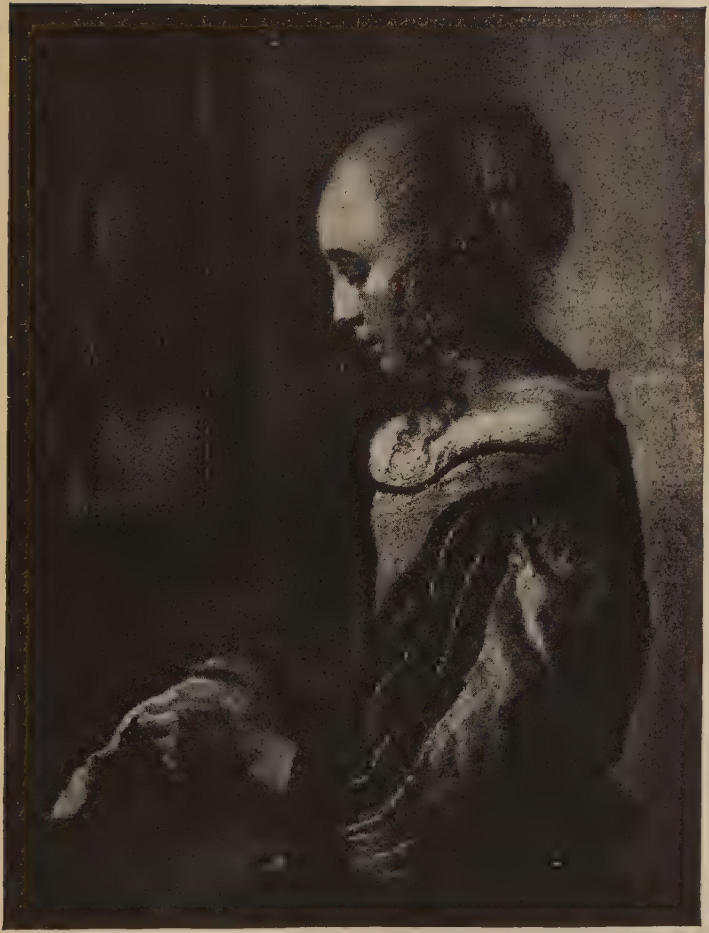

Fig. 174

Occidental Objectivism (Vermeer)

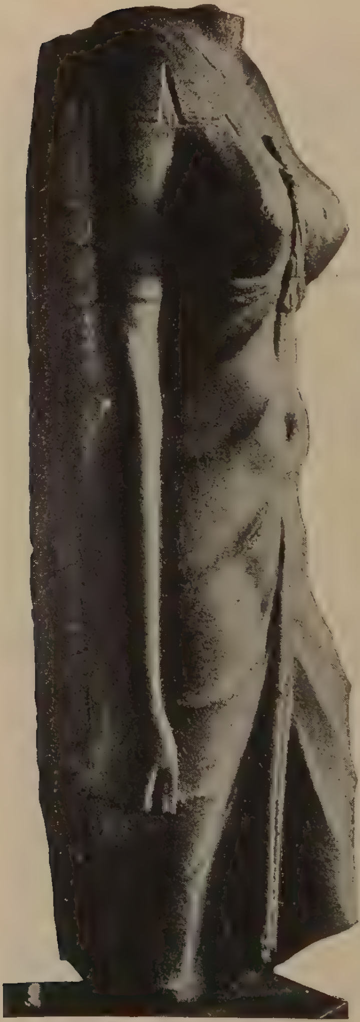

Fig. 175
Equilibrium (Egypt)

expression, a singular contradiction exists which will never be solved. It seems that the longer the rock of style holds, against the flowing torrent of life, the more chance there is for the survival, intact, of the conception of life which that style represents, but also the more it runs the risk of impeding the course of the flood. Egypt and China offer us the most illustrious examples of these complete civilizations, stylized from one end to the other, which prefer death upon the spot to renewal. Style which is an instrument of enfranchisement for him or for those who conceive it, is an instrument of enslavement for him or for those who revere it. This is the source and the secret of that permanent tragedy which the soul of man will always harbor; it is through mastering his spiritual life that he creates his own liberty, but he only creates his liberty to the detriment of those who have not the power to discipline their own. Obedience is the law of moral liberation. Grandeur and slavery reciprocally condition each other. A civilization is the more durable the more it knows how to maintain the reciprocal dependence with the more constancy, rigor, and, if you will, cruelty.

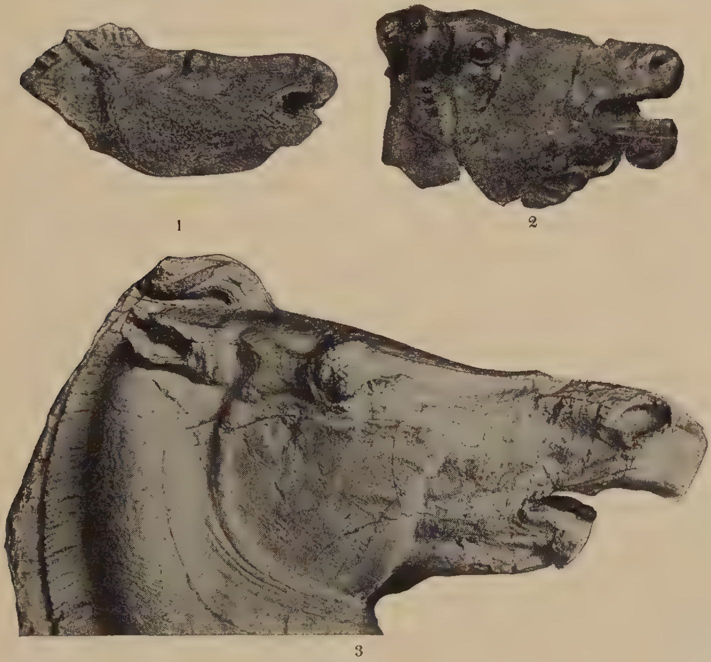

Fig. 176

Permanent Objectivism

1. Head of a Horse, Prehistoric Art. 2. Head of a Bull, Ægean Art.
3. Head of a Horse, Greek Art

V

The resolutely symbolistic civilizations alone can offer this long resistance to the incessant encroachment of the images that other civilizations bring in from outside and to the curiosity fired by powerful individualities within the civilization itself. Singular mystery that opens between the Oriental and the Occidental soul an abyss which is, indeed, capable of being crossed, since they have never ceased to react upon each other, but which is very difficult to close. The one tends to remain within itself and to see in the world of phenomena nothing but an inexhaustible symbolic treasury destined to represent its vast but obscure aspirations. The other tends constantly to emerge from itself, to keep account of its aspirations toward positive conquest by the never complete definition of the nature of those phenomena, upon which it strives to model itself. The language in which the Occidental soul expresses itself is symbolic also, no doubt, like all human language, but it aims unceasingly to trace the symbol from the object itself. Whereas once the essential aspects of the object have been caught, the Oriental soul aims only at absorbing it in the fluctuating life of the symbol. The latter pursues *its* truth, the former pursues *the* truth.[1] If both, in their great hours, resist the fixity of their nature it is because, according to the needs of those hours, there is a constant change of direction in the truths that we pursue both in and outside of ourselves; it is because the one in grasping the object perceives his own mystery, as the other, wishing to utter the mystery, is forced to grasp the object.

It is none the less true that an Occidental will not understand the art of the Orient, that an Oriental will not understand the art of the Occident if they refuse to explore the two borders of the abyss where flourish two illusions of equal fecundity, that which defines the world by what passes in man and that which defines man by what passes in the world. If the Egyptians seem to me to have realized a miraculous accord of these two grandiose illusions[1] it is perhaps because the geographic, ethnic, cultural elements of the Orient and the Occident fused in them with an equal depth, an equal power. This harmony has never occurred again, save perhaps in music. Who knows if, one day or another, thanks to the initiative of music, it will not recur?

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[1] Figs. 174, 177.

The strange thing is that no matter how far back one goes into the past of Asia or Europe one finds these two attitudes of mind, even before the influence of Egypt, through the instrumentality of Greece, had spread over these two slopes of the Old World and transmitted to them the principles by which each of them was to determine its aptitudes and develop them so logically as to be characterized by them. Assyrian art, which aspires only to expression, already shows monsters contrived to express some central idea, the character of which—in this case violence and cruelty—is only emphasized by natural shapes. Mycenæan art, on the contrary, ignores composite monsters and aims at the truth. What am I saying? A hundred centuries, perhaps two hundred centuries before, the troglodytes of Perigord and the Pyrenees thought only of reproducing, with as much energy but also as much exactitude as possible, the images of animals and men in their everyday occupations.[2]

The rôle of Greece was to confirm the entire Occident in this primitive attitude by educating directly or indirectly, one after another, sixty generations of architects, painters, and sculptors. Meanwhile it had also reawakened Asiatic sculpture, which was henceforth to pursue its road alone, everywhere fabricating unheard-of beings with the bodies of men and the heads of beasts, with the bodies of beasts and the heads of men, creatures furnished with twenty arms, looking out from seven faces,[1] endowed with infinitely combined attitudes of strength, tenderness, death, and love.

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[1] Fig. 175.

[2] Fig. 176.

The above is, to be sure, a summary statement of the rôle of Greece, one ceaselessly contradicted by sudden interpenetrations, by the Arab conquest, the Mongol invasions, the Crusades, the navigation of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the incessant flux and reflux of two worlds engaged in material or spiritual warfare. It is a statement corresponding to the general reality, however, pointing, with European art, to a plastic universe peopled with natural forms, always close to man and life, depicting man and life, even in the most mystical works of religious symbolism, with fidelity, insight, unfaltering exactitude, and refusing to abdicate its interested optimism. On the other hand it shows Asia forcing man and life, even in such familiar objects as house and clothing, to assume the aspect of its boundless dream, distorting rocks with fantastic figures, giving tangible shape to its grandiose nightmares, and refusing to abdicate its hopeless pessimism. When Occidental art is abandoned by faith, at the periodic visitations of criticism and negation, it falls a victim to its incapacity to see and seek the spirit beyond or outside the form; and again when the faith of the Orient slumbers, or is poisoned by too many miasmas or enervating pleasures, its art is undone by its refusal to interrogate this form in itself, and by its consent to lie passive before the pretended immateriality of the mind.

This obstinate refusal of the Orient to emerge from the symbol is found even in its architecture which, we must admit, suffers from it and nowhere, save in a few civil or military buildings of China or Northern India,

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[1] Fig. 177.

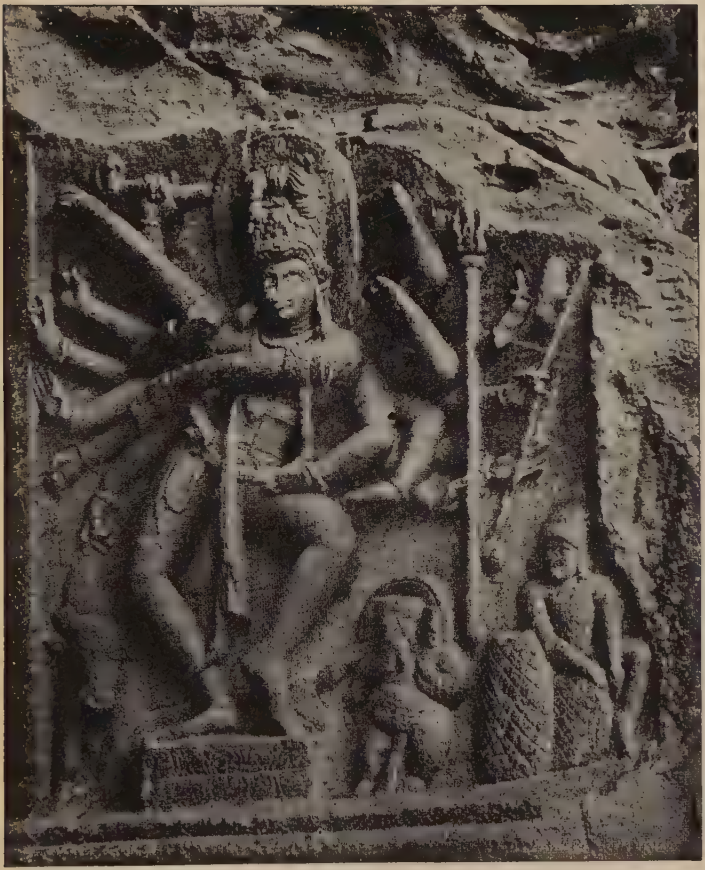

Fig. 177

Oriental Subjectivism

presents that nudity of surface, that density of mass, that simplicity of proportions and of rhythms which, through France, Italy, and Greece, have made the grandeur of Occidental architecture and to which it was fortunately led, in its great periods, through its concern with the purpose to be achieved. In China, in Japan, in Indo-China, in the East Indies, in the whole of Dravidian India, an evident symbolism prevails from the top to the bottom of the edifice and determines its least details, now accumulating, one after another, forests of bas-reliefs and statues that rise tier upon tier in cones, pyramids, or spheres, in a fever of ornamentation that recalls the unwholesome bloating of succulent plants bristling with poisonous darts,[1] and now super-

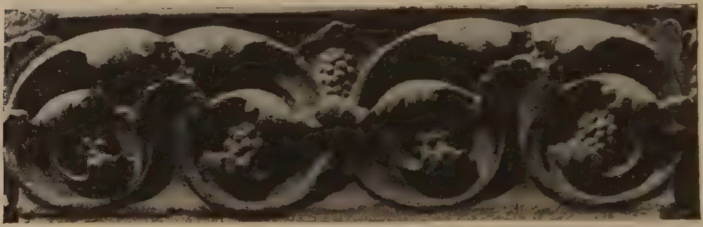

Fig. 178

Analogies Occidental Objectivism (France)

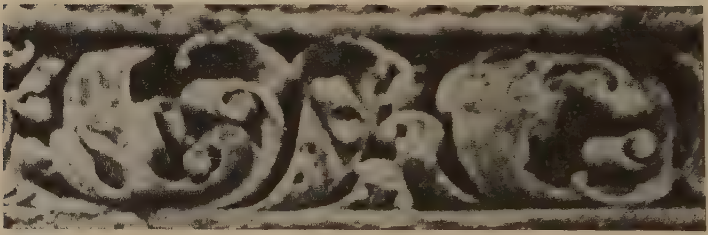

Fig. 179

Oriental Subjectivism (India)

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[1] Fig. 131.

posing, on a complicated framework, cornices and roofs that are useless from the functional point of view.

On the contrary, even in the periods when religious symbolism takes possession of Occidental architecture, it remains faithful to its great lines, to a simplicity of conception and structure that places the entire edifice in equilibrium about a definite function, such as a crowd to shelter, heavy bronze bells to raise over the towns, as defense against surprise or assault, definition of the organism, even the spiritual organism, through the agency of utility, the rational distribution of masses in view of solid construction, and a harmony of the ensemble that satisfies at once the practical and logical needs that characterize the mind.[1] It is true that Occidental painting and sculpture are reproached for these very qualities, or rather for a too constant concern with them, and that they often give it an indescribable air of bureaucratic propriety, limited on all sides by the fear of ridicule, of the unusual, of the excessive. And our art does this just in the way that the monstrous architectural faults of Asia can, when her painting or her decorative sculpture is considered, assume a lyrical grandeur, capable of modeling or hollowing out mountains and almost unknown to the Occident.

Almost unknown, although from the eleventh to the twelfth century, especially in France, the Occident did pass through a period quite analogous[2] to that which we have described. A less intoxicated period, unquestionably, since, as we have seen, architecture resists to the very edge of decadence the measureless swarming of forms which only succeed after three hundred years in bending, and finally in breaking its osseous framework, under their weight. Like Asia, the Occident was firmly resolved to consider the material universe only as a thought of God. I am aware that this is the theological idea, I know that Christianity cannot make its symbols penetrate the soul of the people save by invoking precisely the testimony of this material universe. I am aware that the image-maker brings his most candid application to copying the scenes and the beings that are the constant source of his everyday emotions, if indeed philosophy sees here the representation of the spiritual drama that determines its concepts.

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[1] Figs. 30, 53, 88, 124, 125. 195, 206, 217.

[2] Figs. 178, 179.

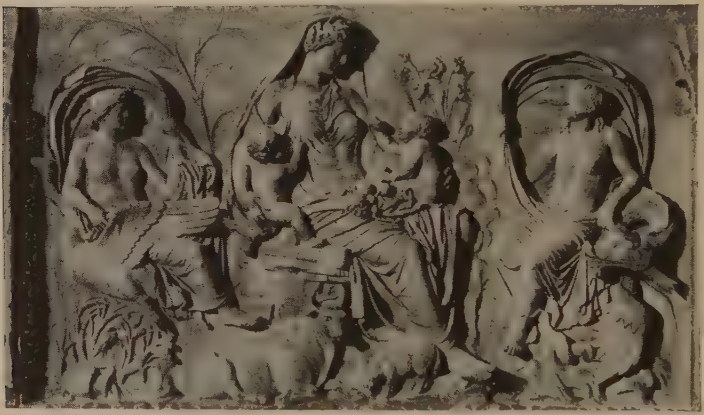

Fig. 180

Allegorical Orthopedics (Rome)

Nevertheless, Christian symbolism lives in the heart of the image-maker as it does in the mind of the philosopher; it is merely a prolonged echo of a remote perturbation of the soul that has become common to virtually the whole Christian world. As in Asia, all the scenes of life are henceforth obscure symbols and the emotion which the image-maker experiences is his "subject." When long study of these scenes substitutes in the image-maker—as indeed it does in the philosopher—the need to express this reality more and more accurately, for the need to use it to express a moral emotion, then the forms, though stripped of their symbolic meaning for the multitude, will acquire a new symbolic sense through the conquering thought of a few great individuals. Then we shall see in the Occident, as in Greece after the third century, and in almost the whole of Roman sculpture, allegory[1] trying to replace the lost symbolic emotion to suit the needs of mean souls. Instead of emerging from within the form itself, blossoming out of it, so to speak, uniting with light itself through imperceptible passages from plane to plane, from profile to profile, from mass to mass, the allegory will plaster itself upon the form, like a moral orthopædics designed to sustain the inner architecture which it has forgotten as well as the mystic emotion that once drew attention to it. I know no one in painting but Rubens who has had a sufficiently powerful feeling for life to be able to introduce allegorical figures into the general movement of his work, and Giotto who has had a soul pure enough and an intelligence supple enough to give such figures soul and intelligence.

VI

First after Phidias, again after Giotto and the French cathedrals, has the Occident been deprived of the universal symbolism according to which it conceived the world of appearances. And I believe that it is partly the fault of allegory that it has been driven to seek the elements of an individual symbolism in this naturalistic conception of form which has led it furthest from the Orient. The Greco-Roman need for truth which has been expressed twice, first thanks to Greece and Rome, next thanks to the Italian Renaissance through the pursuit of anatomical expression, has determined everywhere this naturalistic conception which has saved European architecture, and by introducing modeling into its painting, has conferred upon it, in the last analysis, the sometimes grandiose but more often commonplace privilege of transferring the illusion of life, through values and perspective, to a two-dimensional space.

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[1] Fig. 180.

Greek art, and with it a great part of European art after the fourteenth century, is in truth more monstrous than these very Egyptian, Chinese, Hindu, Aztec monsters that, in a horrible or tender mystical communion, combine human forms with animal forms, animal forms with plant forms, the forms of life with the forms of death. Monstrous because it does not dare, like them, to carry the spiritual life into a form resolutely and fully symbolic, which enthrones it on a mystic plane, outside the real. Therefore it chains us to a determined perfectionism that forbids us lyrical rapture. The great divisions—idealism and realism—that have been forced upon all Occidental art, and from which Oriental art escapes almost completely, go back, finally, to this exclusive care for descriptive perfection which has so often been fatal to the art they affect, even though it has caused the emergence of a few great individuals. Caused, I say emphatically. We should have but a poor explanation of Rembrandt or Michael Angelo, for example, if the Occidental need of truth had not weighed upon them for more than twenty centuries—what am I saying?—for the twenty thousand years that separate them from the reindeer-hunters, no doubt—and had not imposed on the incessant conquest of their moral equilibrium the pathetic air of a soul that wishes to shatter its matrix while modeling itself on the form of this matrix, now with fervor, now with humility.

Each of these divisions responds, it is true, to some

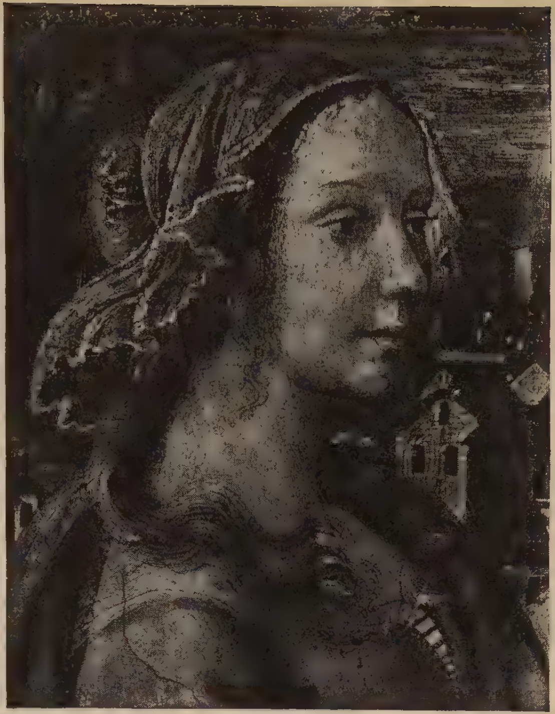

Fig. 181

Contemporaries (Ghirlandajo)

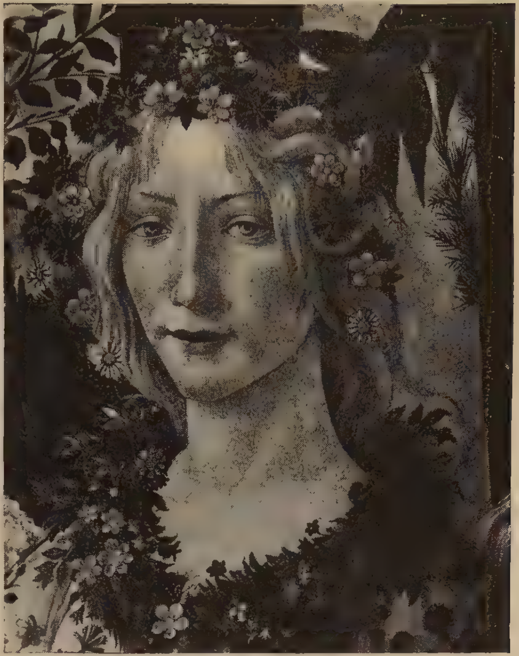

Fig. 182

Contemporaries (Botticelli)

precise thing. They are both the complementary expressions of European naturalism. They have not ceased to penetrate each other, as in Rubens and the French romanticists, to spring from each other, as when the Bolognese school was grafted on that of Rome and Venice, for example, or when Praxiteles and Lysippus succeeded Phidias, to alternate, one with the other, as in France when we go from the Clouets to Poussin, from Poussin to Chardin, from Chardin to David, from David to Corot, from Corot to Courbet. They even exist side by side if one will compare, in the same country and at the same period, the Clouets with Jean Goujon, the brothers Le Nain with Le Brun, Ghirlandajo with Botticelli,[1] Carpaccio with Giorgione, Tiepolo with Guardi.

Nevertheless, the two currents that bear them are easily discovered if here, also, we will steep ourselves in the customs of the country and the race, in their spiritual history and their particular reaction to events. European naturalism almost certainly leads to plastic "idealism," its southern peoples who tend to define the race; and almost certainly to realism, its northern peoples who tend to define the individual.[2] Let us remember that in both cases it is a task accepted by virtually the whole of humanity, and that in one place it is expressed socially by Protestantism and political liberty, in the other place by Catholicism and the tendency to trust to autocracy or even convulsive Cæsarism in matters of social organization. For in one case it is necessary to stimulate, develop, and warm the inner life that tends to stifle the duller instincts, the less burning passions, the less mobile imagination, and then seek the real man, and describe and characterize the forms seen close at hand, in the dwellings where

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[1] Figs. 181, 182.

[2] Figs. 183, 184.

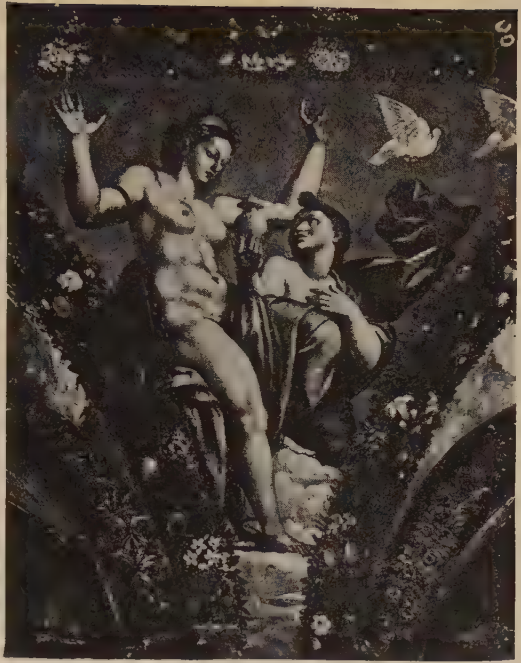

Fig. 183

Idealism (Raphael)

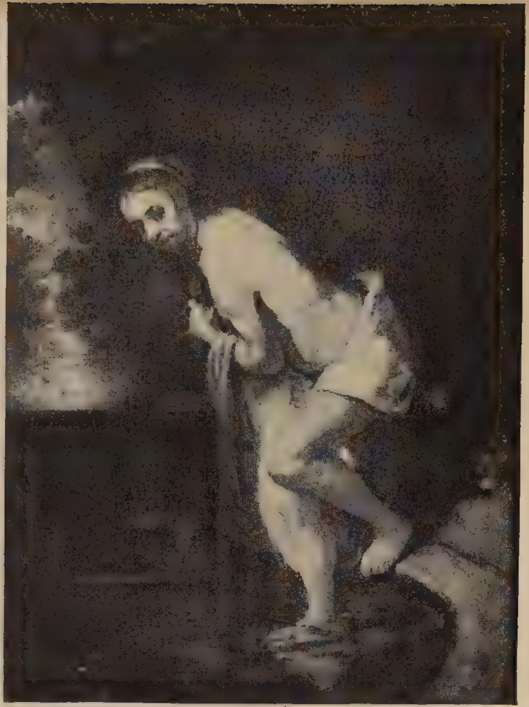

Fig. 184

Realism (Rembrandt)

the winter is spent, or out of doors where, drowned in fog, the relations of the forms to one another are uncertain, confused, broken—more sentimental than plastic.

In the other case it is necessary to simplify the inner life that has been ravaged by more precocious instincts, less restrained passions, and a more richly nourished imagination, and subsequently to define man as a genus, man as a function of the social interest, to establish the unity of forms as they appear in light and revealed by light, plunged in a space where everything solidifies, having for each other relations of contiguity and continuity that tend persistently to plastic generalization.

It has been said of Hellenic art, the father of European naturalism—using singular expressions, for that matter—that it mingles the ideal with the real, as if the ideal and the real were two sauces of almost equal consistency which could be mixed together in a pot. And yet that art did possess an exact feeling for equilibrium which resulted in the impossible and perfect monster we have already met with. Is it the direct ruggedness and descriptive power of the Doric, that had come down from the North, or the sublety and generalizing memory of the Ionic, that had sifted in from Asia, through the islands, that explains the mystery? The fact remains that the never forgotten elements of form, unceasingly and constantly scrutinized, impress on Hellenic generalizations a character of direct, intuitive exactitude that make us feel that we just passed an actual example of them a few minutes earlier, when we turned the corner of the street that leads to the museum, or climbed the path that leads to the Acropolis, and that its most searching and faithful descriptions have something universal and typical which, the moment we leave the Acropolis or the Museum, show us a monument of architecture in almost all the passers-by.

The savage realism that characterizes Spain, Southern and Catholic, constitutes a singular exception to that naturalism, with its two complementary faces, which in the last analysis, distinguishes the Occident, when one thinks of Asiatic symbolism sweeping both the individual and the species away together in a torrent of spiritual excitement, in which the universe itself is a factor. A sort of fury drives Spanish realism to pursue form to its most frightful abnormalities, even to its leprosies, and to enthrone in art not only the individual, under the appearance which is proper to him and the aspect he wears amid his everyday acts—a task in which the Fleming, the German, the Dutchman, the Northern French excel—but also the abnormal individual, the blind, the idiot, the lame, and to open to rags, rubbish, and filth the gateway to the illusions which the idealists say were created to make us forget filth, rubbish, and rags, as well as the existence of the blind, the idiot, and the lame.

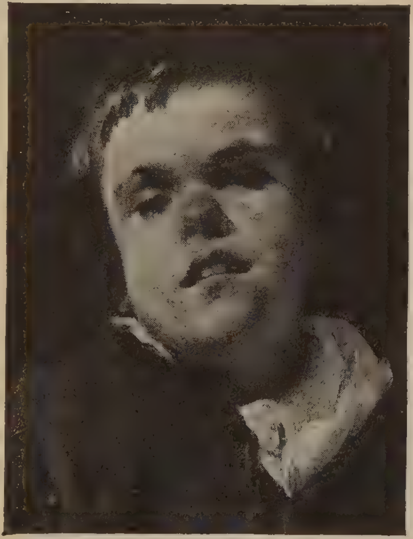

Fig. 185

Spanish Monster (Velasquez)

No doubt to explain this striking contradiction it would be necessary to search for the mingled ethnic and geographical causes, to investigate, perhaps, the chaotic aspect of a soil that is broken, wild, rugged, degraded, lacking in harmony of shape, or perhaps the old Iberian heredity of which we know so little; and, almost surely, Arab fatalism impressing on Catholic discipline the fierce resolution to transplant the supernatural into life and, precisely because of this fanatically to accept this life, even to its worst horrors. In any case here, as in Holland and in Germany, the idealism of form is unknown to artists, who never alter a shape for the sake of more attraction or surer charm, but for the sake of more emphasis and better characterization. They cannot escape from this implacable realism save by introducing into it a harmonic unity which is also reality—but which only a few exceptional men have been able to discover in this cruel landscape with its subtle harmonies of silver, trembling in space, in the black of hair and cloaks, the pearly tone of jewels, the pink of roses, the red of pomegranates, carnations, and hair-ribbons.[1]

Rather than the Florentine or Greek ideal of form, then, it is symphonic painting which, by way of Spain and Venice, Flanders and Holland and France, has opened up the road of the musicians and has saved the Occident from its need of realistic truth, though we must admit that architecture, system, science, and industry have progressively arisen from that truth. Around anatomical sculpture, projected on a plane by the visual imagination, it has created an artificial space that binds it to all the points of space and mind. Thus truth, urged to the limit of its powers, leads fatally to a new illusion which is the mystic sentiment of the continuity of the universe. It is Asiatic mysticism that leads the Occident to the love of truth. Why

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[1] Figs. 33, 185, 186.

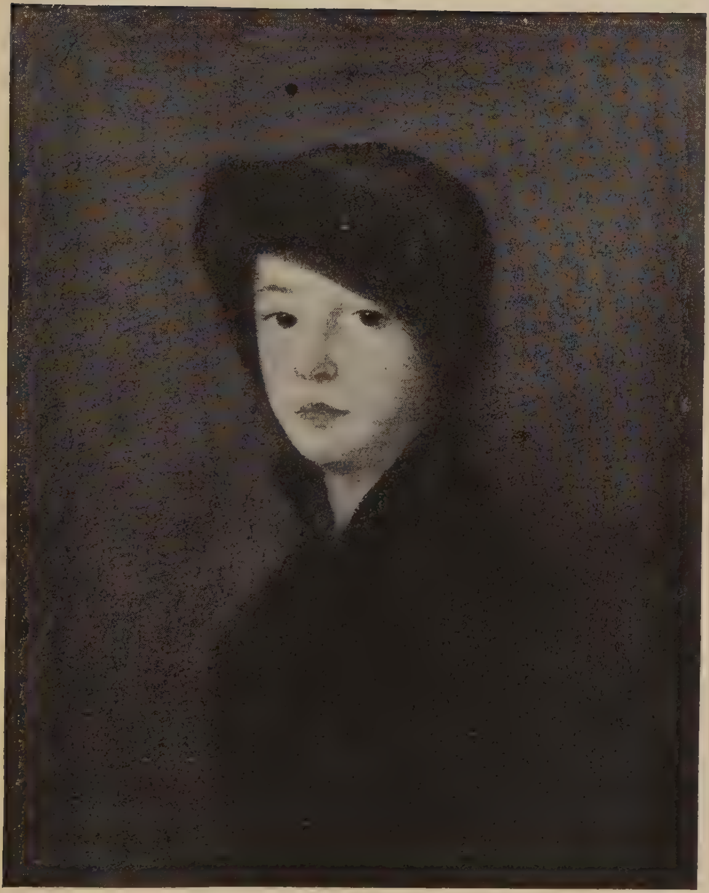

Fig. 186

Spanish Harmony (Goya)

should not truth lead the Occident, which conquered it, back to the mysticism of Asia? This would be a sufficient justification of the universal symbolism from which art cannot emerge save through the emancipation of a few choice souls who bring it back, inevitably, to universal symbolism.

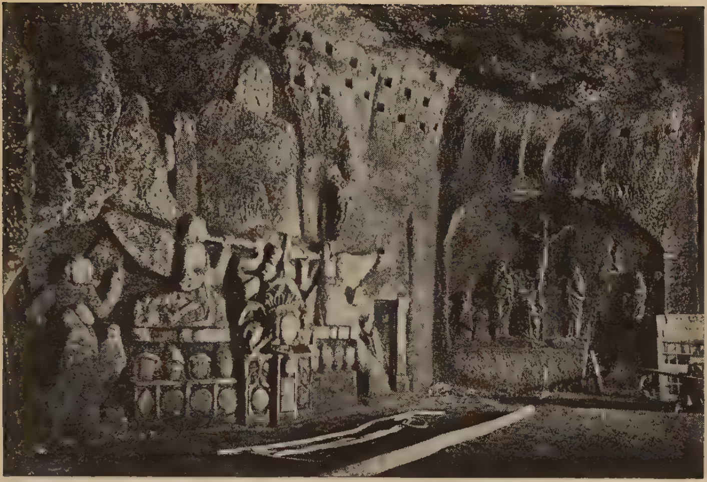

Fig. 187
Brantôme, France

Chapter VIII. THE POWER OF THE IDOL

I

A RELIGION, or rather a somewhat formless mass of beliefs which had accumulated, ranging themselves side by side, and often fusing, endured for fifty centuries. It peopled the valley of an African river with temples, tombs, avenues of colossi, pylons, pyramids, and obelisks, as if life and death had had no other function than that of demonstrating the truth and the constructive power of those beliefs, around which all social and domestic and political and military life was arranged. An art as categorical as it was subtle, in which the spirit of fineness and the geometrical spirit are merged, fills the vast space of the oasis and of the desert and five thousand years of history, which is practically unknown to us save for the testimony left by this art; it fills this space and time with a species of musical rhythm which is uninterrupted and which bears, on the surface of its wave, an inexhaustible freshness of impressions, of sensations, and of sentiments as vibrant as the life in the murmur of the dawn, as firm as the logic in the still voice of the mind. The soul of man circulates in the combining forms of the gods, aside from whom men cannot conceive the labors of the fields and the river, the universal symbolism which sets the hawks soaring in the formidable light, which builds a monstrous temple in order to lay within its darkest center the mummy of a crocodile, and causes to arise, stone by stone, a mountain of granite, fixing the unanimous movement of the heavens.

Another religion, during five centuries, covered the reddish promontories which enter the waves like the prow of a ship, with small, harmonious temples that seem to be constructed both upon the scale of the visible universe and that of pure intelligence, and, without effort, to reconcile in an eternal balance all the contradictions of the moral and the social life, antagonistic divinities, warring interests, and struggling factions. Here, in the whole monument as in its slightest detail, in the statue of the god as in the frieze and the metope where the adventure of the city is spread forth, there was discovered a harmony—which seems to have been immediately accepted and defined for all time—between the real elements of the most concrete world and the idealistic and generalizing tendencies of the mind, between the least dissimulated sensuality, on one hand, and reason on the other—the type of reason most stubborn in defending its conquests, between the most fleeting shudders of the moving surface of the forms and the most permanent laws of their inner structure, which little by little determines our spiritual edifice. The flanks and the arms of the gods were exposed to the swords of men, the breasts and thighs of the goddesses plunged,

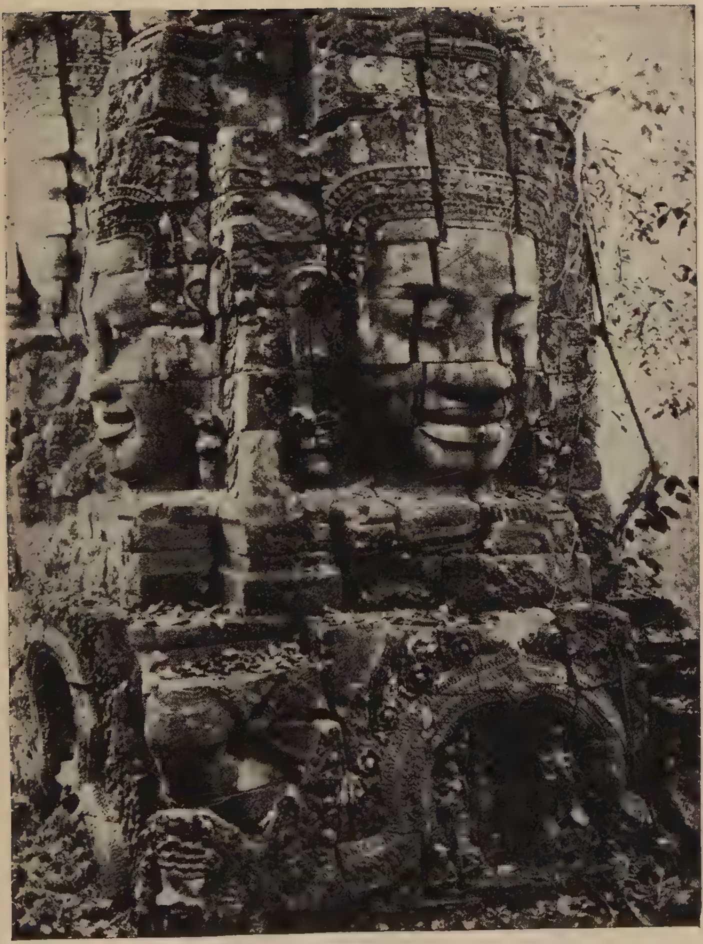

Fig. 188

Brahman Idol (Cambodia)

side by side with those of the women, into the clear streams bordered by laurel woods.

Another religion, one that is immemorial and that still lives, and that might rather be called a confused mingling of a hundred profounds myths thrown up together by a tide, as the sea when it ebbs leaves upon the beach dead fish, jellyfish still alive, flowers of the sea, and a coating of salt—this religion hollowed out, sculptured and modeled mountains; sometimes for a century or more it led four or five generations to penetrate a mass of granite in order that they might live there, love, be born, and die there, and each day cause innumerable forms to blossom there, where scenes of copulation and of the lives of the apostles are found beside each other. Another religion, issuing from this one like a glowing child from a delirium of passion, covered all of eastern Asia and the islands in the dazzling seas of the Orient with prodigious edifices which the wild beasts, the birds, and the reptiles invaded from top to bottom as if in the trunks, the branches, the leaves, the corollas, and the pollen which grow there and fly as in a whirlwind, they recognized the odors and the green darkness of their native forest. The Brahmans pushed forth from within the stones haunches in movement, the thousand divine arms bearing the lotus or the axe, calmed breasts, and eyelids made heavy by sleep, and the incessant rise of the animal instincts in man. Likewise the Buddhists sculptured flight, sculptured the dance, sculptured the swaying and the very coolness of the palm, and the very murmurs, the spasms, the sighs, and the perfumes.[1] And if Brahma,[2] the inexhaustible matrix, welcomes, in his four flat faces, the deep flood of material life which rushes in from every side to participate in modeling his forehead, in causing his nostrils to beat, his mouth to tremble, and his eyes to be bathed with somnolent voluptuousness, the robe of Buddha, between his knees, seems a chiseled cup where the light comes to sleep. The confused universe is present wherever man is, even if the form of man is alone upon the rock. Man is present wherever the confused universe is, even if the carved vegetations and waters represent no more than the feverish bogs and forests which he could not traverse.

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[1] Fig. 202.

[2] Fig. 188.

And though that other religion, proscribing the image of every living and moving thing, the better to isolate itself in the contemplation of the invisible, covered the deserts with light cupolas, and with minarets shooting up like cries of ecstasy, its whole spiritual movement turning and expanding, and sweeping along in its whirl something of the odor of roses, something of the colored palpitation seen on the breast of doves;[1] and although still another religion, on the contrary, piled up in the disorder of a single tottering mass all possible forms, especially those of death—claws and fangs, empty eye-sockets, and the teeth and tongues of snakes[2]—in one case as in the other the idea of a divinity active and present everywhere governing the agreement of man with religion, in an exaltation which the multitude feels and which it translates into a language which stirs us by its unanimity. It is the same spectacle in the Occident and in the Orient, when Christian Europe, between the sixth and the fifteenth centuries, suddenly acquires consciousness of this spiritual unity which it has conquered from the chaos of sensation and from the tragedy of history, through some chosen race which seems destined to propose its moral image to the future, under the splendid appearances of a material image in which man, even when most heavily bound down by animality,

[1] Fig. 70.
[2] Fig. 55.

and his divine vision of life are to recognize each other for an hour. Is there any need to evoke, under the overlapping vaults and the sturdy pillars which amass the orb of the spheres above a golden shadow, the gleaming mosaics in which slender forms are elongated, where immense eyes open, concealing in their depths a complicated and sensual mysticism around which are lights that seem to tell of danger, blue flies and green flies over sleeping waters, putrefaction, and poisons hidden under the luxuriance of flowers?[1] Is there any need, above all, to recall the vast efflorescence which carried upward, over the pavement itself and from the surrounding countryside, clear forests, murmuring waters, the produce of the kitchen garden, grapevines on the slope of the hills,[2] so many beasts, so many vegetables, so many leafy vines, and so many familiar countenances which, as a fervent crowd, form the escort for the pillars in their swift ascent, and for soaring vaults which cradle in heaven the courage of man as they render his works divine?

If, from the Andes to the Himalayas, from the Pacific to the oases of Africa, and from the Nile to the North Sea, one tries to seize at a single glance the universal plastic poem in those manifestations of man through which he has most constantly and magnificently defined himself, one finds it connected almost everywhere with a mystical support which is the more impressive because it translates almost everywhere a unanimous sentiment. Art seems never to have attained summits comparable to those which it has mounted, almost always at a single bound, in concert with religion, which then mingles with it in so close and familiar a manner that it is impossible to separate one from the other without annihilating both by the same stroke.

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[1] Figs. 89, 172, 204.

[2] Fig. 191

II

And yet, if one penetrates more deeply into this mystery of æsthetics which is so poignant—as poignant as the birth, the hesitations, and the decline of love—how many facts leap forth suddenly before the anxious investigator and oppose themselves to that too-simplifying conception which connects the development of art with the development of faith, and which affirms without hesitation that art does not develop, or languishes, or falls as soon as faith is lacking, or oscillates or weakens! Hellenic art at its decline, and Hellenistic art almost in its entirety, even and perhaps especially in their most arresting manifestations—beautiful goddesses wholly nude who are no longer any more than women,[1] from whom all the heroic fervor has disappeared, innumerable statuettes of courtesans and of women of the world, tormented portraits of poets or thinkers, and dances upon the vintage are only a passage (sensual, familiar, and full of regrets and of promises) between the unity of Paganism in its death-struggle and the presentiment of a new mysticism which is nowhere formulated. During three or four centuries, in this nervous, restless, and often erotic art which flowers on all the shores of the European, African, and the Asiatic Mediterranean, it is practically impossible to find any trace whatsoever of religious sentiment. The same phenomenon, at the moment of the second Renaissance, when Italy, with da Vinci and the Roman school, conquered the Platonist evasion which attempted, in the fifteenth century, to hold Christianity to an enervated and morbid form which its mystico-sensual character was, on the contrary, to sweep forth beyond the borders of Christianity, in order to launch the modern world upon unexplored paths: Venice peoples the palaces and churches alike with the most magnificent forms that painting has realized in the reciprocal, close, and continuing exchange of colorations and reflections—the waters, the lands, the skies, and their animal and vegetable multitude contributing the most powerful of their voices to the choir of the senses, which mounts from all the races to affirm their taking possession of the poetic universe. All religious sentiment had disappeared from these forms, to such an extent that nude goddesses were to be seen in the sanctuaries and that, in banquet halls, swarms of angels and holy families covered the walls.

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[1] Figs. 189, 200

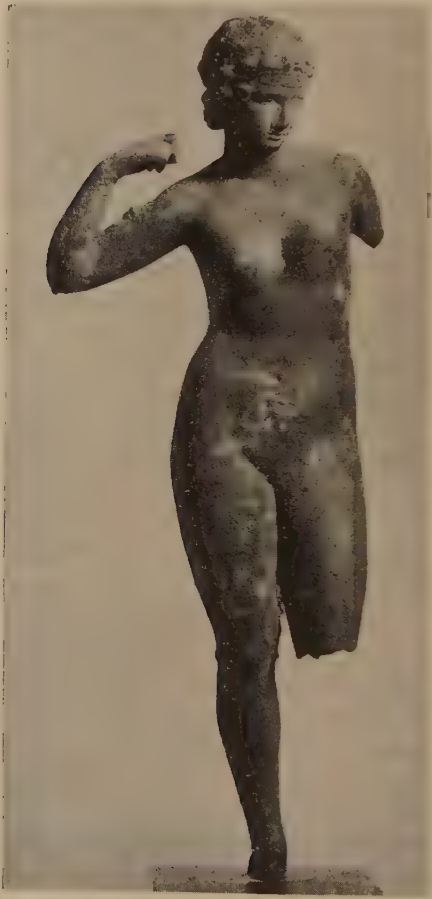

Fig. 189

Profane Statue (Hellenistic Art)

In Italy as in Greece, the religion, which adored images and was visual before all else, scarcely perceived the progressive substitution of one idol for another idol. The idol retained the same name, and its apparent forms changed only insensibly from one generation to the other in the proportion that its inner life matured and rose, like the juice of a fruit, from its depths toward its surface, to burst forth and spread over it in full expansion. In other places, in the East of Europe, and especially in the North, the process was quite a different one. At Byzantium, in the eighth and in the ninth centuries, the Church and the Emperor tried to break the idol and to push Christianity back into the invisible interior of abstract mystical sentiment, as, in the same periods, Islam was covering the conquered lands with edifices, where no human figure, no silhouette of an animal, and no leaf of a tree ornamented the capitals and the altars. And it is precisely at the hour when poor and stiff forms,[1] enveloped at every point in the matrix of the most fixed dogma, are appearing timidly upon the profiles of the temples, which had been practically bare until then, that St. Bernard, in the following terms, anathematizes the still lean and quite confused budding of the popular belief which is to submerge the edifice and at the same time lift it up: ". . . So manifold and so astounding does the variety of the forms appear everywhere, that the monk is tempted to study the marbles far more than the books and to meditate upon these figures far more than upon the law of God." The monk was, moreover, to lose his unique privilege of building and decorating the church; he was to leave to the corporations which were being formed so strongly within the frame of the commune the business of erecting and ornamenting the religious monument, under the same conditions and according to the same principles as the civic monument.

It seems therefore that the æsthetic apogee of Western Christianity, between the end of the eleventh and the end of the thirteenth centuries, in its ensemble, and despite the symbolic meaning of the ritualistic formulas for architecture and for the images, was a kind of confused protest of the instincts of a devout people against the original commands of a mysticism which the concilia and the bishops were maintaining as well as they could. Christianity, by its incessant appeal to love, had amassed so much sap in the imaginations which, at the same time, it was compressing by its multiplied prohibitions, that the unanimous desire to spread forth this sap in the immensely varied and nuanced form of the hundred thousand living or inert objects which make up our universe was to spout forth with the power of a flame held in by the volcanic crust. We must not forget that the founders of the Church, St. Paul the Jew

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[1] Fig. 190

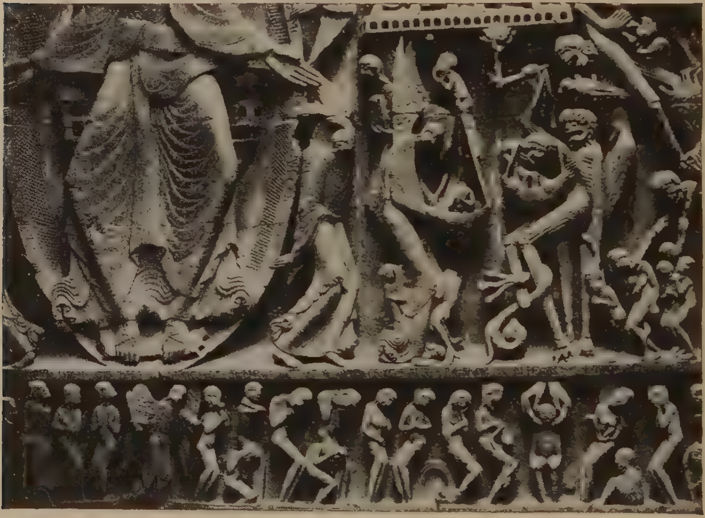

Fig. 190
Christian Idols (Autun)

and St. Augustine,[1] were explicitly and fiercely iconophobes, and that Jesus himself, a Jew, with all his universal tenderness, had never appealed to the image in order to stir the hearts of men. The immense concentration upon themselves which, in the earliest consciences, had marked the birth of the new religion, necessarily implied the misunderstanding of natural forms or even disgust for them. They could not reappear, first at Byzantium, then in Italy, and finally in France, save as concrete symbols of the life, of the feelings and of the expansive imagination seeking, outside of their contact with the forgotten universe, to express in the tumult and the fever of enthusiasm, the healthiest, the most animal, and the most fecund of all the instincts. The Christian paradise and the Christian myth were so real and so beautiful in the candor of the people that it had to appeal to the innumerable forms and the marvelous colors of the world to glorify them. The grapes of the vine and the salads of the market, the sparkle of the seas, the purpled gold of the skies in the autumn forest, and all the occupations which, in the fields, bring forth bread from the earth and, in cities, manufacture wood into troughs and iron into tools, invaded the monument to carry the whole of man nearer to the work of God. It is the fault neither of St. Paul nor of St. Augustine nor of St. Bernard, but perhaps a little bit that of Jesus, if man, thanks to this very orgy of the senses, was, while studying God's work, to forget God himself. For the cathedral, dying of the excess which had brought it to birth, but at the same time awakening the objective curiosity of certain minds in the multitude, crushed full-blown Christianity in its fall.

At all events, a miraculous equilibrium had here, for a century, been able to maintain—between the abstract religion due to the brain of the Prophets modeled by the desert, and the love of the charming forms which characterize the soil in Western Europe—the powerful idea of a universal symbolism expressing the unity of the soul by the multiplicity of the aspects of this soil. It maintained itself, in the heart of a people which is as distant as the land on which it dwells both from Catholic paganism (forgetful of the Christian law in order to imagine the poem of form as an expression complete in itself—independent of the pretexts which inspire it) and from Protestant puritanism, forgetful, in order to return to that law, of the immense variety and the immense charm of the forms in which the theater of England, and Germanic painting and engraving, and the Nibelungen had, however, found their nourishment. Here, consequently, there occurred a phenomenon the reverse of that which in Italy wrested form from religion. Puritanism wrested religion from form. It has been believed, it has been said, that Rembrandt and German music express the Protestantism of the North.

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[1] Perhaps a Semite. He was of northern Africa, which had, in the past, been colonized by the Phœnicians.

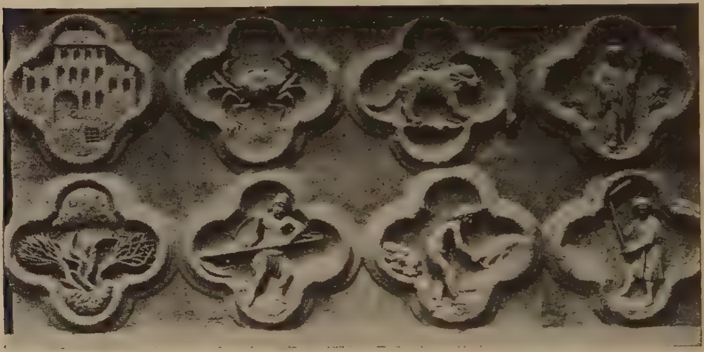

Fig. 101
Profane Idols (Amiens)

The whole of Dutch painting, and before all and above all the whole of Rembrandt's painting, are an instinctive and probably unconscious protest against the iconoclasm of the Beggars. They are the pious transporting of the image from the church into the house. The whole of German music, with that of Beethoven in the front rank, appears, after two centuries of frightful religious carnage, as a secret revenge of the spirit—protected by the hermeticism of musical language—against puritanical fury, and the return to the abstractions and to the original prohibitions condemned in advance in the North by Shakespeare, by Dürer, by the chorale of Luther himself, fed with meat and beer, joyous and barbaric, as, with song, he led the crowd forth to battle. Protestantism and Catholicism are more or less happy means of governing, more or less durable and more or less suited to the peoples who adopt them, and the one did not will German music any more than the other willed the ogival church of the provinces of Northern France. As to Christianity in its primitive purity, there was needed its profound and prolonged contact with the souls of peoples formed by their soil and their mysterious atavism, their joys, their food, and their misfortune, for it to be transformed in the intimacy of those souls, to the point of expressing them by means whose use and abuse, precisely, had, by reaction, caused its birth.

III

But there is more to be said. Very much is lacking before we can find the highest and purest tension of the religious spirit coinciding everywhere with the highest and purest expression of the æsthetic sentiment of one people. The examples of this are innumerable, from Egyptian polytheism to the modern monotheisms, from the religion of Brahma to Greek anthropomorphism. In Egypt, for example, the religion, ritualized and hierarchized by a powerful priesthood, does not really exist until after the great invasions, that is to say during the artistic decadence of the New Empire. The rudimentary fetishism, multiform and rather confused, of the Ancient and Middle Empire, saw the birth of the finest works of Egypt, the majority of which, moreover, are not at all religious in character.[1] It is the epoch which extends from the great pyramids to the great temple of Karnak, that of those innumerable hypogees decorated with frescos of vermilion and of emerald in which the gesture is so pure that it

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[1] Figs. 27, 38, 65, 173, 175, 192.

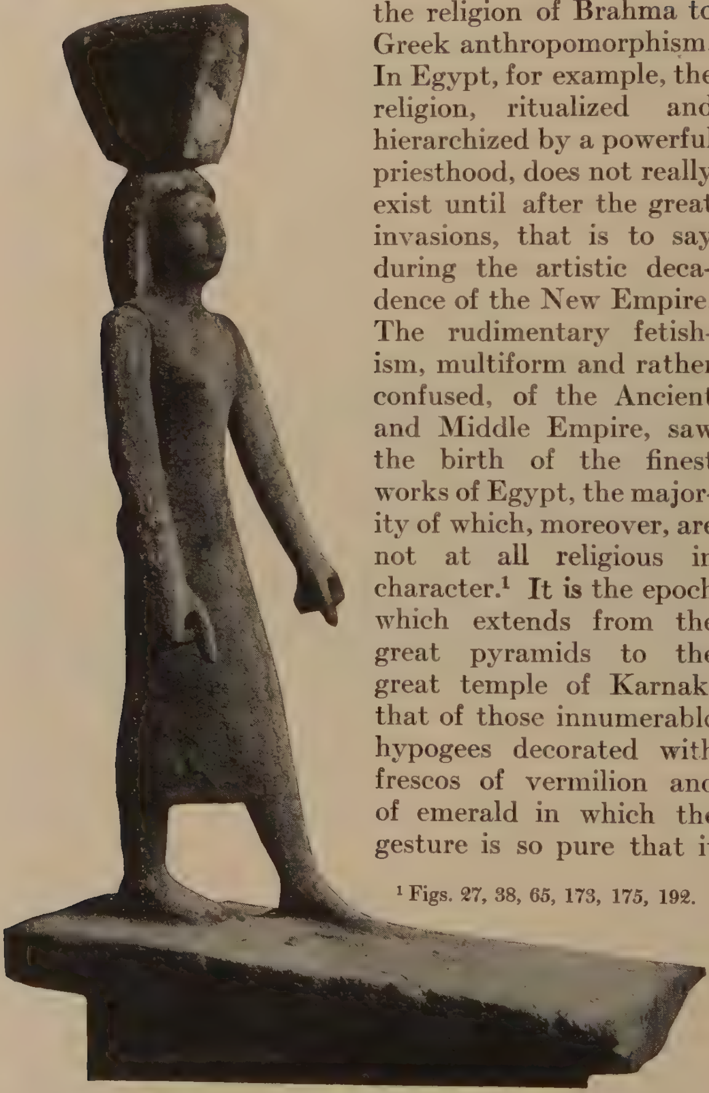

Fig. 192
Profane Statue (Egypt, v Dynasty)

seems to express the silence; it is the epoch of those seated scribes and of those marching statues of wood, around which everything seems dead. In Greece, before the eighth century, at a time when the Doric order has not yet plunged its powerful roots into the ground, and when a few formless wooden dolls and a few poor earthen vases express the beliefs and the primitive needs, religion is much more firm than at the times when the Peloponnesus and Sicily are covering themselves with sturdy temples which seem like squatting beasts. Nearly a thousand years before the first mountains of India receive into their entrails a people of painters and of sculptors, Brahmanism exists; and Brahmanism is still active, as living as ever in the depth of men's souls, when four or five centuries have passed since Hindu art lost that vast mobility full of searchings and murmurings, which make one think of the sea. The petty practices of Chinese fetishism, surviving the mystic crisis of Buddhism and floating upon a great depth of tolerance and of moderation in religious sentiment, did not prevent the sculptors from erecting on the desert, avenues of warriors and of monsters so majestic that they seem contemporaries of the most ancient solitude. Islam, which is as robust as ever in the faith of the people—or which was so, at all events, less than a century ago—has, for five hundred years, been without the secret of the mysterious life which the geometrical formulas chilled in the arabesque, and the secret of the fantastic lightness of the construction. Moreover the Arab, its creator and its propagator, has himself constructed nothing. He delegated that task to the conquered peoples, who were artists and producers already in their past, and who contributed, in serving him, their natural genius, perhaps their desire to please the master, and the freshness of a sentiment renewed upon contact with an unknown myth. Hindus, Egyptians, Persians, and

Berbers made of Islam their faith. And the Turk, despite his faith, has not known how to build.

These eclipses, these hesitations, and these silences are perhaps more striking in Christianity than elsewhere. Outside of Italy and especially of France—outside of Flanders and of Spain at times, of Germany to a small extent, I dare not say of England—this religion which persists for eighteen hundred years has not produced a truly specific efflorescence, of a living and multiform style, innovating and conquering each day and in all places, save during four centuries at most. Christian art disappeared from Italy even before the fall of the free city, and from France when the Commune gave way. In the most fervent periods, the fifteenth century for example, when the drama of the time was sweeping into all souls like a torrent, when it was without trace of bewildered mysticism, when the religion of Jesus was less discussed than at the period when it was joyously mounting everywhere above the countryside and the cities by means of a thousand towers and spires trembling in the sound of the bells, it was no longer, in its imagery, any more than a tormented and complicated thing whose supports were falling away, whose inner structure was becoming dislocated, and whose profiles were disappearing under the profusion of the ornament.[1] In Spain, during the most Catholic centuries, when the Reformation had caused fanaticism to arise, and when the soldiers, their rosaries on their wrists, carried the cross and torture into the whole of the West, and later, when, to prevent the touching of a poor idol in the niche of an old pillar, a whole city let itself be slaughtered, man after man, woman after woman, and let house after house be burned or torn down, the great forms of art—Velasquez and Goya—are almost completely secular, by no means mystical, in any event. The only mystic, the only man who gives that sensation of supernatural realism which is Spanish Christianity—living cadavers dressed in purple and in iron under the sepulchral lamp, cold ashes, livid lips, and the narrow idea arising to a great height—is not a Spaniard, but a semi-pagan from the Orient whom the people calls "el Greco."[1]

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[1] Fig. 165.

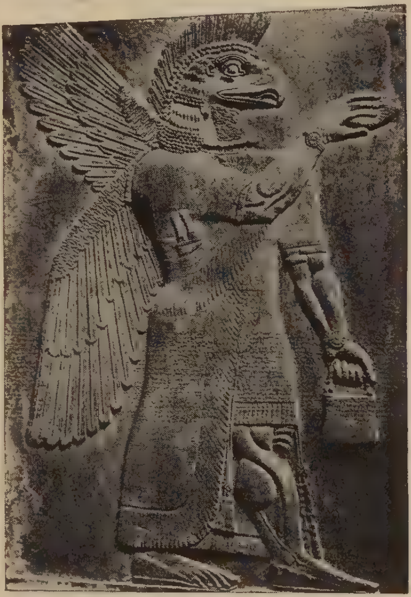

Fig. 193
Composite Idol (Assyria)

Certain forms of Christianity itself, some issuing from the Catholicism of Rome, others from Byzantine orthodoxy, and others again, it is true, from iconoclastic puritanism, have had no more than an insignificant plastic expression, a non-existent one at times. Polish or Prussian or Hungarian or Austrian or Russian or Jugo-Slav art has not really passed the popular stage, Hispano-Americanism has not even attained it, the Eastern rite has not renounced the Byzantine icon indefinitely repeated, and American Quakerism and, in its train, the multitude of religious sects of that vigorous people have, for long, preserved silence, a silence which their attempts at Europeanizing have broken with unfortunate effect. It is no new phenomenon, moreover, which we see in this. Old religions have remained silent. That of Iran, for example, so pure from the moral point of view and upon which there was grafted without being penetrated by it, a hybrid, heraldic and monarchical art,[1] which drew all of its elements from Assyria, from Egypt, from Greece, and from India—and which never took root in the soil. That of a neighboring region, Chaldea, and Assyria especially, whose direct and terrible art[2] developed almost entirely outside the religious spirit, the myth inspiring only certain composite monsters whose cruel character emphasizes the violence of the habitual sources of inspiration—hunting, war, tortures, executioners, victims, vultures upon carrion, and men and lions in combat. That of Rome, while very sincere and vigorous, but of which the plastic expression is only imitation and repetition of older forms, whereas an admirable civic architecture—of circuses, theaters, roads, and aqueducts[3]—affirms the grandeur and the permanence of an intention in which there appears no trace, however fugitive, of a religious sentiment. This architecture, moreover, develops when the mythology has reached a completely anarchical stage, at the moment when paganism is at its death-struggle, when Christianity is stammering, and when the new cults of Asia, tottering and jostling one another, are confusedly invading the Latin world, which lets them do their will: an admirable maintenance of the unity and of the majesty of the mind advancing alone—for utilitarian purposes, to be sure—like a ship upon the waves.

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[1] Fig. 210.

However, let us state the fact. Something is lacking in that art, as also in Greek art especially after Phidias, in Japanese art[4] which develops almost exclusively outside of religion, and in European art since the sixteenth century, if one sets to one side the heroic souls who have possessed a sufficient constancy and continuity of effort to hold up the columns of the temple and to maintain in themselves a religion surviving the forms of the confessional—Michael Angelo, da Vinci, the symphonists of Venice, Rubens, Poussin, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Watteau, Goya, Delacroix, and some others. But even then an immense sadness hovers over their solitude. In reality, at the hour when for once—for once only in the historical development of a group—the sudden maturing of the religious sentiment coincides with the loftiest moment of energy in this group, something supernatural appears, not falling from God upon man, but arising from man to God. Faith has always been equal to itself, doubtless, since the time when formulated and ritualized religion collected all hearts into a common belief. But something unforeseen has taken place. Historical forces have acted for centuries, by chance most often, designating one people rather than another, because its geographical position is favorable to its fecundation, because the drama of war or of politics

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[1] Fig. 170.

[2] Figs. 69, 193.

[3] Figs. 34, 127, 213.

[4] Fig. 194.

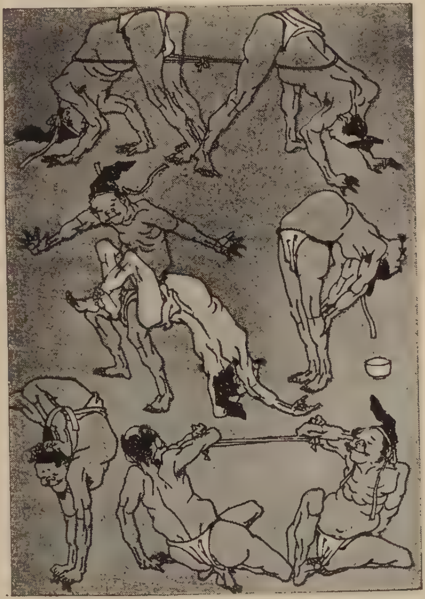

Fig. 194

Profane Art (Hokusai)

is more terrible here than elsewhere and more valiantly accepted, and because, above all, a particular genius which it gets from its soil and from its secret atavisms has formed it for this rôle, and because, suddenly, in a great broad current of enthusiasm, it has hurled its belief, like a virile seed, into the womb of the universe. Such is the crisis of love in the great races, such their organic virility; and during its hour their mystic strength, multiplied by this same virility, seeks and finds its nourishment. It is from the greatest moment of energy, not from the greatest moment of faith, that there issues forth the greatest moment of creation of the species. From the eleventh to the fifteenth century in France, the civil or military edifice is equal in value to the religious edifice. The most beautiful cathedral of the North is not superior in quality, from the point of view of structure, to the Valentré Bridge at Cahors or to the Palace of the Popes at Avignon.[1] Whether the species reaches its faith before its apogee of power or after it, if spiritual energy has departed, art, the expression of that spiritual energy, will depart likewise from the species, to disperse itself amongst chosen individuals and to concentrate itself wholly in certain superior brains.

That which creates art, in a word, is the meeting of virility and of love. It is natural that, up to now, the great religions should have been the pretext for this creation. But they have not always furnished it, and there is no reason whatever why new mysticisms, free from dogma, should not come, in the future, to favor that meeting. The Italian Renaissance, wedding with nature for a second time in the enthusiasm of consciousness, offers the admirable spectacle of a crisis of love analogous with the one I speak of. Perhaps the first

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[1] Fig. 195.

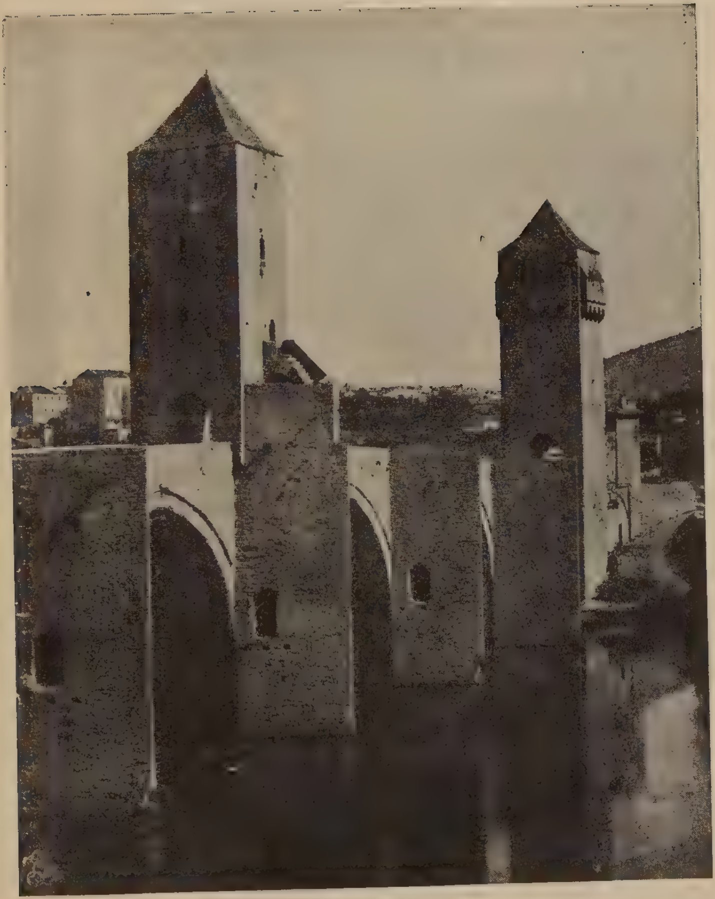

FIG. 195

DRY SURROUNDINGS; CIVIL EDIFICE (Cahors XIV Century) contact of Egyptian energy with the prodigious and still unexplored world of forms at a time when the Egyptian religion was yet stammering, perhaps the monumental statuary of the Chinese after the disappearance of Buddhism, and perhaps the ferocious art of Assyria are in themselves, despite their secular character, miracles which one may compare with the fecundation of a great religious sentiment by an exceptional energy of a national or specific order. However, it is not doubtful that up to now the most powerful unity of that sudden sweep toward the spiritual conquest of the very body of the universe, that burst of energy which carries along together the mystic enthusiasm and the virility of a people or of a race—the one element, moreover, animated by the other—it is not doubtful, I say, that up to now this has almost always and almost everywhere manifested itself under the visible and sensible appearances of religion.

IV

I have said enough to show that I do not absolutely accept the saying of Nietzsche: "Art raises its head when religion loses ground," unless he meant that art often exists before religion and survives it and replaces it when it deserts the hearts of men, and assumes the rôle of a religion in certain cases, often magnifying this rôle when the heart beats in the breast of a hero. Idolatry, fortunately, survives the idol, because it leads mind to mind across appearances, and because it is the only thing that leads in this way. Outside of idolatry —and science is at present the predominant form of idolatry, the most unanimously and candidly accepted, the most cherished, and therefore the cruelest—outside the matter of the world which men interrogate in order to discover what gives it form and movement, there is no longer anything but arid abstraction, the play of the unstable, a circle leading to death.

The idol as a fetish everywhere precedes ritualized religion. It is everywhere reborn, when religion declines. It is everywhere loved and studied, even outside the religion. It is not true that it is born by grace of the religion alone and as a matter of religion. Totemism is not the origin, but one of the origins, of art. There is also—and doubtless it comes first—utility, which creates ceramics, the weapon, the garment, and the tool. There is the obscure sense of rhythm and the need to express it, which create music and the dance—one sees this clearly with the child. There is love, which creates tatooing, adornment, the dressing of the hair, and the jewel. There are hunting and fishing, which call forth recital and description, recital and description which gain from being illustrated. There is the need for shelter, from which there came forth architecture. The immense solicitation of forms, colors, and movements

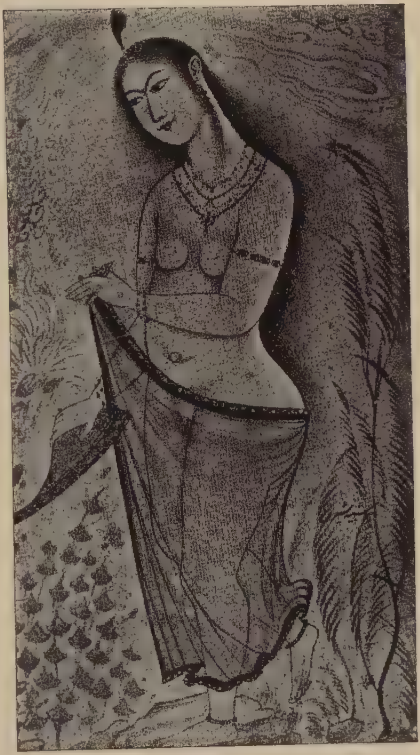
FIG. 196
MUNDANE PAINTING (Persia)

awakens anxious curiosity in primitive man, and he cannot deliver himself of it save by imagining an approximate equivalent which shall prove to him his power of re-creating, for his joy and also in his interest, a universe endowed with forms, colors, and movements.

Neither the cult of the spirit nor objective knowledge destroys idolatry. They change its place or renew it, and that is all. We saw this clearly in the case of the iconoclastic Jewish idea, which reached the heart of the Occident only by means of the cathedral with its wealth of form. We saw it in the case of Eastern Christianity when it decorated the Pan-Athenaic processions with new names, and when it called Orpheus David in order to maintain the lyre among us. We see it in the bosom of Islam itself which cannot prevent the Persian illuminator from replacing the religious idols with the most charming painting of the city and of the world that exists.[1] We saw it in the Italian Renaissance laying its nude Venus in the bed that is still warm from the presence of Mary when she gave birth to the god. We saw it in the sonorous idol that was being born in the heart of the musicians, where puritan prohibitions had trampled down the images. The symbol changes, to be sure, and therefore the idol, so that the pure cult of the spirit or objective knowledge may find a mooring not yet filled up by an illusion which had existed for too long. It is by renewing the idol that man regains his footing on solid ground, whether that idol is called Isis or Brahma, Osiris or Buddha, Athene or the Virgin Mother, Aphrodite or Huitzilopoctli, Dionysos or Jesus.[2] Each is separated from the other by abysses of blood. And yet, when one of them falls into the abyss, the succeeding one, which caused it to fall, gathers to itself the love of mankind.

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[1] Figs. 68, 196.

[2] Figs. 11, 15, 55, 164, 188, 197, 200, 201.

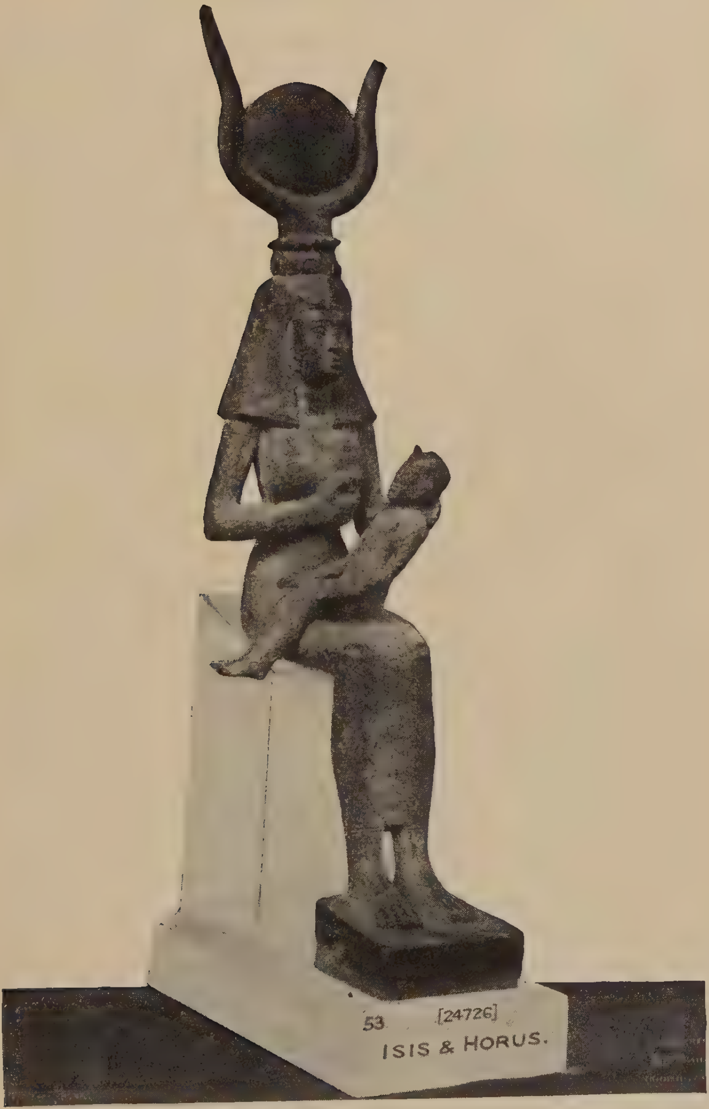
53
[24726]
ISIS & HORUS.

FIG. 197

EGYPTIAN IDOL

The greatest moments of the spirit are those of idolatry, because from each we get one of the aspects of the definitive idol which we shall never carve. For this aspect, which the spirit created by eagerly studying the object and its own relationships with that object, comes to be neglected by the spirit, little by little, as soon as the latter has moved completely around the aspect, has traversed it in all directions, and found out that, now, the aspect has become an empty one. Thereupon the spirit seeks elsewhere, it reaches some spot where there is no longer any visible form, and finally adores itself in its immaterial essence until the day when, turning to emptiness, consumed by its passion, it seizes from the hot ashes of itself certain hard nuclei, veined with fire, in which it gradually perceives new appearances. The soul of mankind does not increase itself, or at least does not find itself again, unless the matter of mankind transmit to it, through the contact of the senses with the matter of the universe, the soul of that matter, in which man's soul recognizes itself. What man adores in the idol is in no wise outside himself, neither is it in any wise outside the world of the senses, which is so made as to reveal to him his own sensibility. It incarnates his spiritual life in its ever-fleeting form. In it he seizes his power of renewing his qualities.

The invisible idol of the Jews, of the Puritans, of the Arabs, and of the Rationalism of the scientists has not been able to impose itself upon the multitudes by any means other than that of a grand literature or music, of an architecture storing up coolness, repose, and shadow at the limit of the waterless deserts where the flaming sun makes life impossible, or by means of a utilitarian system capable, at least provisionally, of satisfying the needs for well-being of the body and for conquest by the mind—idols, idols yet, not less disappointing, in the long run, than the visible idol; and they are less honest ones, I fear, since they promise definitive moral solutions which they cannot give. What incredible poverty on the part of the moralistic abstractors who, for centuries, impose by the sword the verbal idol of the Bible or the Koran to the exclusion of the others, and imagine themselves the possessors of the spirit in its purity! Iconoclasm reveals its strange misunderstanding of the conditions and of the means and even of the essence of the higher cult of the spirit. It annihilates a language whose letter alone strikes it, and which it does not understand. It is ignorant of the fact that form is an instrument from which are drawn spiritual harmonies as pure as those that one asks of the lyre, of the printed book, of the silence of a great soul, or of the liberating activity of a hero. And perhaps indeed it thus betrays its hatred of consciousness, as if it had an intuition that the idol which, as soon as it is really formed, represents the highest human peak of religious sentiment, is also, because it situates and describes that peak, the very point where consciousness (which is the first dawn of an idol in formation) will take its flight. The spirit, in order to increase and communicate its strength, has everywhere sought for material symbols wherewith to render it more accessible to the senses. When it has bound them one to another, and its new symbolic language is absolutely organized, this very language brings it to the revelation of a universe of phenomena which wrests it from its solitude. Iconoclasm, in this sense, is perhaps necessary, since it attempts to protect for the longest time possible the tabernacle of the spirit from contacts with the senses which enervate it and at first dissolve it. But iconoclasm does not know that the spirit has been created by the idol and that the idol alone can re-create it. It is when the idol ceases to be beautiful that it may fittingly be broken.

An Aymara legend—the most beautiful of legends—has it that the creator peopled the world with statues and animated them in order to civilize the world. Is it really a legend? Being carried everywhere, from city to city, from shore to shore, across mountains and deserts, the idol everywhere insinuated the spirit. It is civilization itself. It is the most universal and the most veracious of languages. Into an immediately concrete form, living, existent, insistent, and having a reality of its own, independent of the conventions which preside over articulate language, it translates the abstractions and the relationships which reveal the solidarity of things among themselves and of these things with us. A fetishism, continuing even to our days, was perhaps the one which fertilized Egypt and thereby the whole human race of the later time. The idol of the negroes entered, with the caravans, into the upper valley of the Nile, the rough idol, crudely carved from wood, sensual,

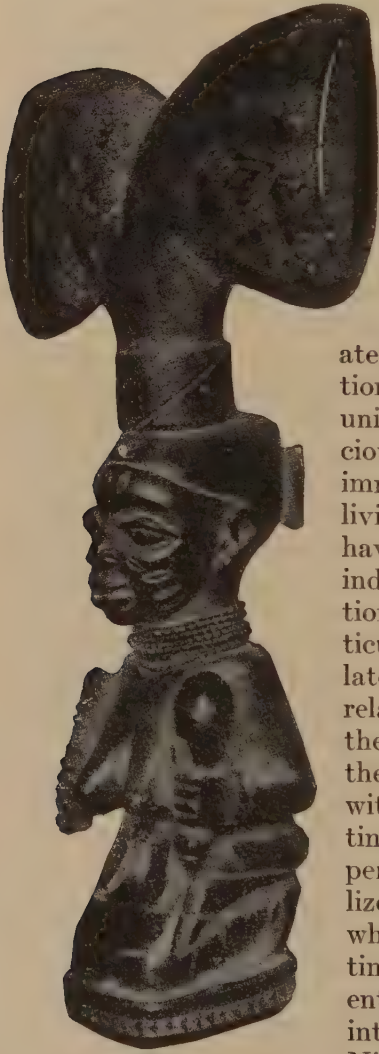

Fig. 198
Relationships (Negro Art)

terrible, daubed with red and blue and showing the attributes of sex, the ingenuous and bestial idol whose profiles were to become calm, whose planes were to become firm, whose surfaces would be made to undulate like limpid water, and which was to mount in the thought of a charming race like flower in the morning.[1] If Egypt, now a dried-out bough, really issued from this, and, through Egypt, Greece and India, Asia and Europe, what do we not owe to it? What should we not have owed some day to its Polynesian sister, advancing from island to island on the prow of the painted canoes, peopling Easter island with solitary colossi and awaking America doubtless, if the Spanish idol, colliding with the Toltec idol, had not crushed the new world to dust and compelled it to accept the Occident? There are idols which die, certainly, and for ever. But sooner or later they are dug up, and sooner or later, in some civilization centuries old, they are the determining cause of a more or less deep-seated disturbance whose echoes are heard in the most distant future.

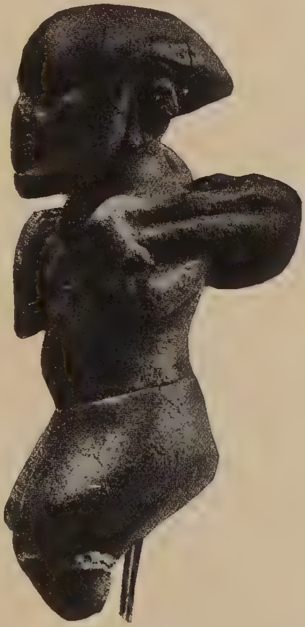

Fig. 199

Relationships

(Egyptian Art)

Observe now the course that is followed by those which encountered virgin races which were ingenuously awaiting love. See the Phœnician mariner landing on all the sandy shores of Africa and of Asia, at all the rocky coves of Europe, and displaying his gewgaws at the water's edge. See the circle, at first hostile or timid, of natives armed with flint, naked or dressed in skins of beasts, and approaching step by step, beguiled by the smile of the fat, curly-bearded face that is lit up by the red lips and the white teeth of the strange man dressed in purple whose arm, encircled with golden bracelets, turns this way and that a little figurine painted with ochre, vermilion, and azure. There are women in that circle, as you must not forget, who caress and beg, and also some exceptional beings, less noisy than the others, who wonder how that robe could have been dyed, that statuette could have been colored, and that jewel melted and carved. Follow the Ionian fisherman also, prudently advancing in his little bark from island to island toward the shores of the Peloponnesus where the blond invader has burned and razed the cities, slaughtered the men, carried off the women, and smashed the old idols, and who is now astonished by this little dark man who had made him laugh at first and who now captivates him by reciting wonderful fables which agree with those which his shepherds bring back from the mountains and which are illustrated by painted images carved in olive wood, by potteries on which tentacles are twisted, where girls begin their dance and musicians begin to play. Give attention to the growth of their harmony as it reaches out to the temples covered with statues and with frescos, where the philosophers, bit by bit, surprise permanent relationships and equilibriums, the gliding of the spirit from surface to surface, and the articulation from form to form of logic and of calculation. Follow the peddler who crosses the Apennines and descends into Etruria to display, to tribes enervated by a mysticism which does not nourish them, vases on whose background of flaming red there is the quick movement of black forms; see how the tribes bury those vases in their funerary vaults, after having silhouetted on their walls the shadows of those forms. Accompany the architect or the statue-maker from Attica when he is seized by some centurion who takes him by the collar and throws him into the military trireme, with his plans and his models which will thereafter furnish him his task of explaining them to the Roman engineer and marble-worker. Install yourself behind the Macedonian phalanx, in the chariots which transport, with the baggage of the army, admirable women of tinted marble whose hair is of a reddish color and whose nipples are brown, going to the bank of the Indus where multitudes, possessing no art, but intoxicated by sensual legends, await them in order to make them fecund, and with their children people the immense peninsula, and spread their genius, by the Buddhistic missionaries who think they are bringing nothing but their gentleness and their god, into Indo-China where gigantic temples will arise, into China where the cavern will take on movement, and even to the islands of Japan, where their trace will remain visible for centuries after the time of Jesus. Follow their course upon the other slope of the world, first to Byzantium, where they conceive the idea of clothing themselves in order to become more troubling, as they concentrate their terrible sexuality, mingled and kneaded with mind, in their fathomless eyes, their pallor, their painted mouths, and the jewels which clank on their arms and glow in their hair. You will see them reaching out thus to the two shores of the Adriatic, and around Florence and Siena, encountering and ardently embracing other images descended from the Gauls, and bearing in the folds of their robes, in their ingenuous smiles, in their direct and human gestures, and their discreet colors, a reflection of the stained glass left in the cathedral, so that they might there replace the carpets of which men had caught a glimpse at the time of the Crusades, the far-away carpets of Iran on which the flowers of Persia and the gems of India are crushed

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[1] Figs. 198, 199.

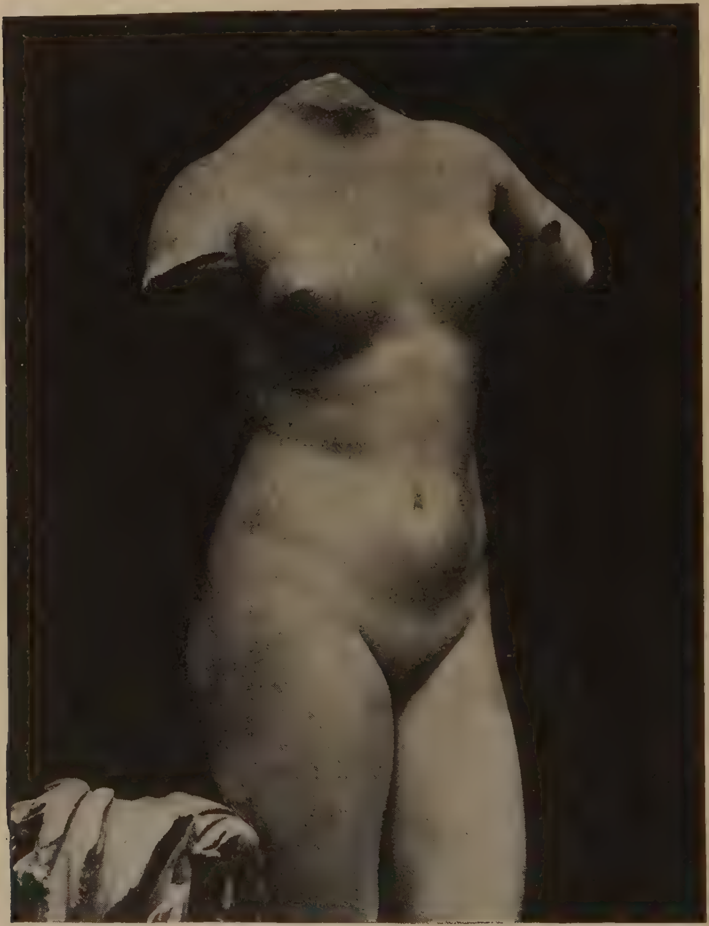

Fig. 200
Pagan Idol (Greece)

together in the depths of the weave. After that, you will see them confronting their thin colors and their ripe forms with the thin forms stamped on strips of paper which are sold for a few coppers to the Patricians of Venice by German soldiers of fortune who are coming down from the Alps every day; and their colors are confronted with the ripe colors spread out on little canvases which Florentine bankers order in Bruges or in Ghent. I should never come to an end in following their Odyssey. Today, through the sudden invasion of the immemorial idols of Africa, of Asia and of America, the spiritual skeleton which the Helleno-Latin ancestor had bequeathed to us almost intact lets itself be broken or dislocated in order to permit all the rivers of the spirit to deposit their alluvions in our weakening energies.

V

Thus the idol pursues its march, always reborn, always integral, silent moreover, and affirming nothing but itself, among those contradictory or even antagonistic systems which die, one after the other, in their explicit claim to be the holders of the Truth. One religion is iconolatrous, another iconoclastic; this one is materialistic or realistic, that one is idealistic or devoted to the spirit; here is one that is sensual or indeed bestial, here is one that is moral or indeed ascetic; now love is exalted by one, now flouted by another; they condemn or glorify war, and are eager for the blood of victims or rebel at the shedding of blood. But all, at their great moment, even when they break an image, do so upon the authority of another image, verbal or musical, or plastic, most often, and by means of this image they plunge into the heart of men the definitive form which history recognizes in them. The idol is not alone the vehicle—it is also the governing test of the myth. What am I saying? The idol is, in reality, what creates the myth, or at least what renders it living and enthusiastic in our hearts. One of these myths—and doubtless the most human one—succeeded really in establishing the conviction that their god was more than spirit only with those among its faithful who devoted to it their finest moments of energy and tenderness, only by making of each one of them an accomplished idolater. The birth of music, taking possession of the torrent of dull images which were circulating deep down in men's hearts, and spreading that torrent forth in all the directions of its rebounding waves, re-created Asiatic pantheism in the North. Mediterranean polytheism reappeared in Italy by impressing wonderful visages upon all the morose passions whose mystic exploitation had smashed the ancient world. At the half-way point, in the French cathedral, the two met to encircle Christianity with such a murmur of life that its idols, which thought to lock up religion in the temple, plunged it back into the universe.

There, indeed, is the key to the mystery. Only the polytheistic or pantheistic religions create the idols and are created by the idols in a passionate and continuing exchange of ideas, of sensations, and of sentiments. The monotheistic religions, on the contrary, being hostile to the idol, either triumph with the help of the idol or else die where they have grown up, unable to renew themselves. For monotheism cuts the world into two irreconcilable forms, thus ending in a terrible duality which, in the oscillations of the spirit in search of its sources, can lift it up for an hour and prevent it from perishing through the exercise over it of a kind of dictatorship, but which is quite incapable of achieving by itself the creation of one of those poetic edifices through which man, becoming conscious of his harmony with the world, is consoled. When God remains outside the forms, he is perforce the born enemy of the forms, which ceaselessly baffle his activity and which he tends to annihilate. To be sure, there exist everywhere, or at least there seem to exist everywhere, two essential forms facing each other which are called, according to the times and according to the places, according to the circumstances or the needs, god and nature, spirit and matter, body and soul, good and evil, reason and passion, intelligence and instinct, movement and form, male and female, or life and style. But dualism has always attempted to wrest them one from the other and to subordinate them one to the other for eternity. Whereas art, and that activity which is the art of living, conceive both of them as all-powerful and make them genuinely divine at the exceptional moments when, in the heart of the poet, of the hero, or sometimes of the crowd itself, the state of love multiplies them one by the other in a miraculous agreement. It is precisely the ethical religions (spoken of as so essential, so profound because they condemn appearances) that live according to the appearances of two antagonistic forces, whereas art, through appearances, which it loves, goes straight to unity.

Since this very unity is the highest and also the most consoling form of the religious sentiment, it is art, therefore and definitively, which gives to religion its most moving aspect. Religion is only the frame and the pretext for the creative energy of man as it reaches its summit and as it lends to him the enthusiasm which it draws up from the consciousness of itself. There is no "religious art." Any art is religious in its essence; and, with love doubtless—of which it is the spiritual flower—it is the sole creator and also the sole reliable evidence of that grand intoxication which moves mountains and which is called religion. It affirms the eternity of that religious spirit which precedes, includes, and buries the forms which it assumes in the sects, and

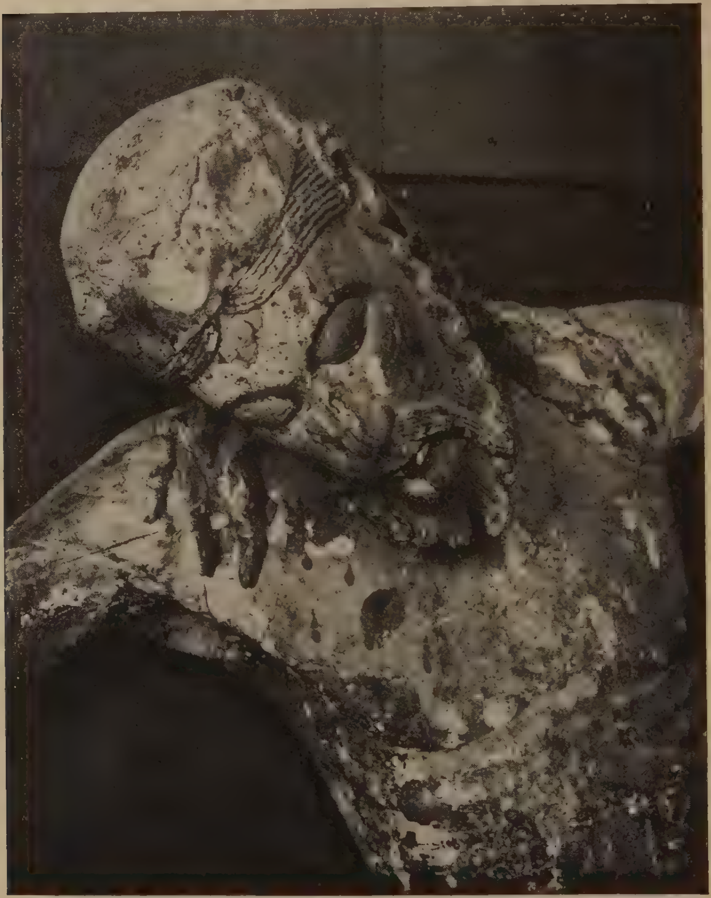

Fig. 201
Christian Idol (France)

it shows that they are masks placed upon its true countenance by the temporary needs of the instincts to be developed and the directions to be taken. Art plays with the religions, tenderly, but with fury. It plays with the religions like that divine monster, the only one beloved, the only one knowing how to love, who sees in all women nothing but successive incarnations of love, and who leaves each one of them broken, bruised, and sometimes dead, but carried by his mere embrace to the summit of her true power, during the time that she belonged to him. Art, like that monster, is immoral, being indivisible and realizing in itself, by the mere fact that it is living, the cruel unity of life. It is the hard idol which persists upon the desert and upon the tombs because it did not place the arid idea of moral perfection at the threshold of the knowledge of form; and, residing at the center of the passions, of the antagonistic systems, and of the pathetic drama of action and of movement, it has sought its food within those struggling forces and shaped its bronze or its stone from their accepted contrasts.

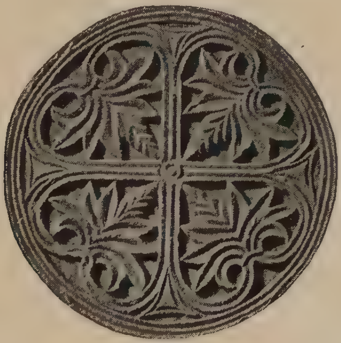

Fig. 201A

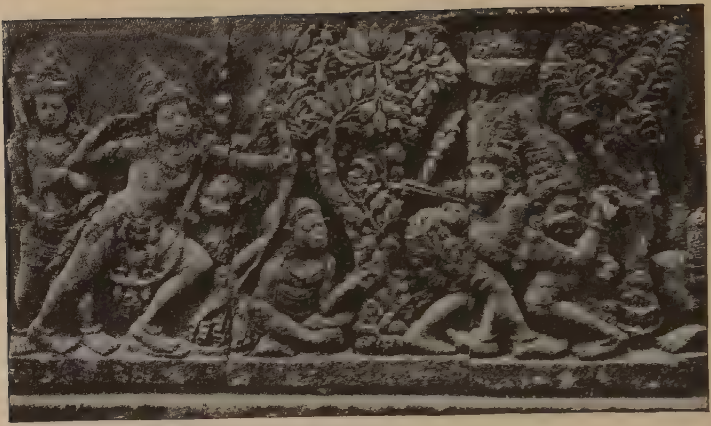

FIG. 202

Chapter IX. THE POWERLESSNESS OF THE POLICEMAN

I

IN FACT, since the artistic ability of man left its first traces upon split flints and the walls of caves, we do not know of a single one of its great moments that coincides with the appearance or the development of what we call "morality"—according to Saint Paul, or Socrates, or even the Zend Avesta. At first, everywhere, at all epochs, these great moments declare themselves against a social background terrible in its violence, its conflicts of passion, its debauchery, and duplicity. Art may be ferocious, like that of Assyria or Mexico, sensual, musical, and charming, like that of Egypt; it may express warlike or amorous customs and range from the cult of the phallus to the cult of the eagle-headed man or of the monster with the empty orbits, clothed in serpents, upon which priests cause human blood to flow. But not once does it offer even a veiled protest against the power of women, the injustice of men, or the indifference of the gods.

Here and there negro or Indian blood circulates, burning and black, leaving its dark trace, like a clot, on the surface of the idols or tinging with rose and carmine their straining breasts and proffered lips. The art of the Hindu peninsula is merely one immense coupling in which all forms marry one another, that decay is close to birth, asceticism to vice, famine to orgy. It is the painful lifting of the mind above religious animalism into which it continually falls back and which cradles it with its warm limbs. The hero, Rama, will indeed conquer the powers of evil, but naked dancing girls encourage him to do so, and the forests he crosses rain on his steps the empurpled snow of their flowers. There rises from this whole art the odor of rut and carnage. When it passes into China it is aired, no doubt, and its sensuality purified. But there is no question, in its monumental forms, of imposing a unilateral meaning upon the laws of life, and if the scribes and monks take possession of art it will be neither to reform it nor to curse it, but to penetrate it with sweetness, to make women walk there, children laugh and play, birds fly, gardens blossom, murmuring waters flow.[1] Whether he bears witness to all this or whether he withdraws into meditation, the sage leaves morality to fight the monsters without which wisdom would not exist.

Nowhere in these countries, to speak truly, is there any question of morality, save perhaps among the Chinese to whom Confucius, some two centuries before Socrates, some six centuries before Saint Paul, brought the essentials of the discipline that was to constitute the basis of Occidental ethics. Neither was there any question of it in Greece up to the time of Socrates.

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[1] Fig. 41.

The unity of Greek art appeared unshakable. The human poem was deified in the rigorous sense of physical beauty, which the sexual instinct surely defined for us. In cities devastated by the vilest intrigues, by the most bloody dramas, when triremes filled with soldiers were incessantly putting forth for battle and pillage, plastic idealism set up the naked man and the naked woman as a pious offering to the security of the world, maintained by the warlike and amorous energy of the race above the horrors that wracked it.

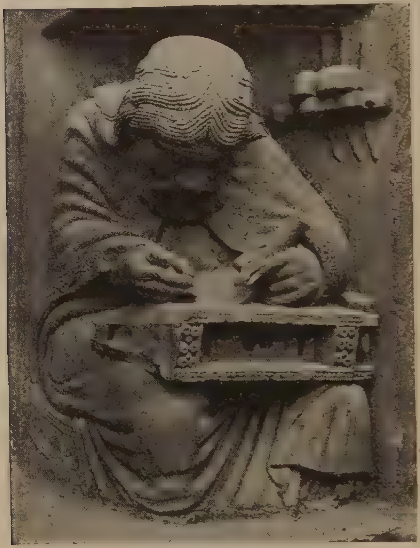
Fig. 203
Wisdom (Chartres, xiii Century)

We know the aftermath of Greek art in Egypt, Sicily, Ravenna, and Byzantium, the frightful fermentation of vices in the later Roman Empire. The gold-laden idols, with their great elongated forms, their asymmetrical faces emphasized by rouge and marked by deceit and lust,[1] seem to distill a sort of poison at the same time that they dispense the love necessary to maintain the curiosity and restlessness of the mind. We know the license of manners in the age of the cathedrals, the concubinage of the priests, the permanent scandal of the convents and the monasteries, the license of the fabliaux, and the mystery plays, the throngs in the

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[1] Figs. 89, 172, 204.

Court of Miracles, the making of counterfeit money by kings, the frightful cruelty of wars and executions, the forgetfulness of morals in the scholastic battles and the metaphysical enthusiasms of the theologians. All this rose in piles of stone to invade architecture from top to bottom. On the other hand there was sly wisdom, amused tenderness, goodness, joy, often broad jesting, sometimes anger, but never maledictions, anathema, or a sculptural sermon.

We can find no similar contrast save again in connection with Christianity, at the moment when the English theater, cradling the soul of Shakespeare amid the smoky lamps and the uproar of the crowds, put three dramas a day upon the boards while the streets were clamorous with furious revels, when drunken or murdered men rolled in the gutters, while decapitated heads adorned the battlements of the Tower, and when a septuagenarian queen had her twenty-year-old lovers butchered if they wearied of her. For it appears that the so-called ethical religions have, even more than the others, offered this surprising contrast between the explosive character of the savage instincts of man and their own pretended moralizing intentions, which have been unable to express themselves save by seizing, with a kind of fury, upon the means of satisfying these instincts. Mussulmans from India to Morocco and from Egypt to Spain avoided appealing to forms of flesh to decorate their sanctuaries to be sure, but this was because the rich were able to secure them at home and the poor believed they would attain them in Heaven.

The adventure of the Italian people is the best illustration of what I have just said. Far more than in the case of the Greeks, the first transport of sentimental Christianity accentuated in them the uncompromising antagonism between morality and the poem inaugurated by the contact of the soul of Francis of Assisi with the wonderful universe. The Italians like the Greeks demonstrated that this poem could and no doubt should develop on the social terrain that was most ravaged by unbounded passions and most bloodstained by warring

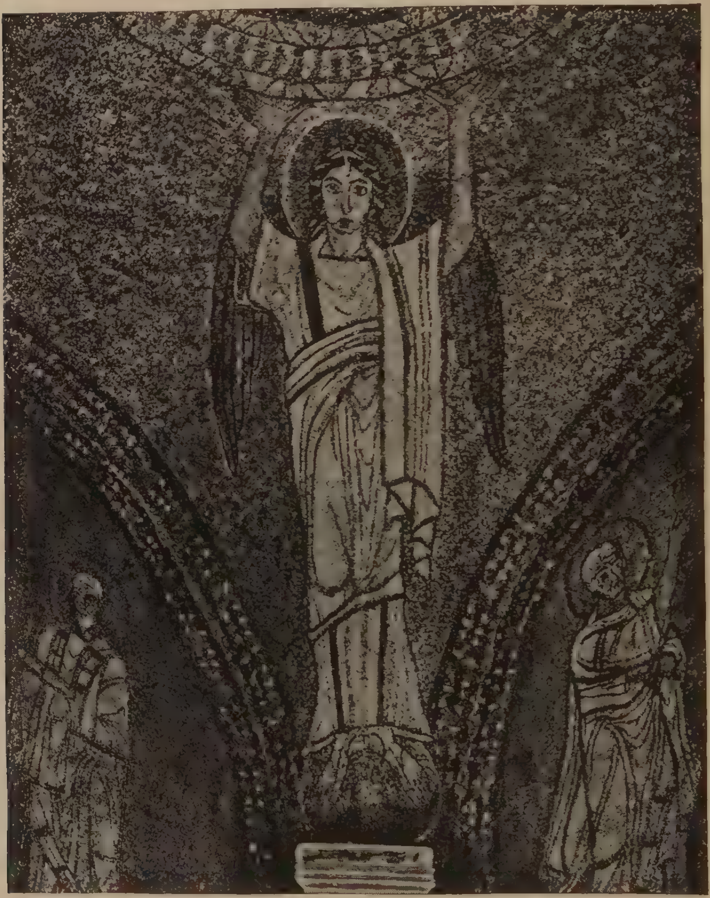

Fig. 204

Double Meaning (Byzantine Art)

interests. Unwittingly, and contrary to the ancient paganism animating the Christian idol, Italian art transformed this poem by introducing Christian love with all its frenzy into the dazzling pagan idol, through which Venetian painters, completing the effort of their race, increased the spiritual wealth of humanity.

II

As for those partial or total eclipses which art undergoes everywhere, even when religion continues, they coincide almost everywhere with the appearance of morality. To tell the truth, I do not believe that morality provoked them. Art, in fact, so far as it is really art, is stronger than morality and also more innocent, being so independent of it that it goes to the point of ignoring it, while morality lies in wait in the shadow and knows very well what it does. . . . Whenever art has, for a time, extinguished its love of form by possessing it, morality has attacked it like those parasites that suck the agony of the eagle or the lion: "All her virtue returned," says Stendhal, "because love left her."

If morality were, as people imagine it, the highest emanation of religion, why should the harmony so frequently noticed between religions and the artistic emotions disappear, or even turn to a complete antagonism when morality divests itself of religion? For it is a fact, and so constant a fact that it appears over long periods of history, precisely, indeed, over those in which the ethical religions, shattering the conquering unity of the great civilizations, cast aside one of the two poles of the soul, instantly chilling it. The hatred of form has no relation to spirituality save in the primitive monotheism of the Semites—Jews or Arabs—which affirms that the spirit lies outside the idol and should dispense with images and symbols in order to conquer and preserve its purity. Later, it forms part of morality, especially of Christian morality, of that of Saint Paul, for example, which is typically Christian, of the Reformation, of the *Gueux*, and finally and especially that of the Puritans of England and America. The terrible dogma of original sin ends by breaking the idol which is flesh, and therefore unwholesome. Every time it comes to life, for the needs or the interests of the moment, the cord and the hammer depopulate lintels, capitals, and niches. Theaters die down, the dance flees, music is cast out, harmonious speech turns to ice and expires on the lips of poetry. The sadness of virtue spreads like a black veil.

Must we continue? We have already met with those wells of shadow which only the reappearing idol has succeeded in crossing, or which the wave of music, born in the still meditation of some solitary heart, has suddenly filled with sound. Art has, no doubt, sometimes dispensed with religion in order to conquer, in a great collective effort, this anonymous and fervent universality which assures its most moving accent. But never, when morality prevails, has it been able to survive save by demanding that the solitary hero protect its wandering steps. We see this after the Reformation when individualism, born in the North, an offspring of the Reformation itself, protects the lyric flight of the heart against the Reformation; it does so through Rembrandt and the Dutch painters, through the English poets and the musicians of Germany.

This result had been anticipated in the sudden importance of the individual in the ancient world when, after Socrates, there appeared the concern for morality which was to end first in stoicism and later in Christianity. Of the swarm of artists who were snatched from architecture and scattered over all the roads of thought and sensation, a few turned directly to sensual researches, that were charming but every day a little more enervated, and so caused color and light to play over the feminine body. The less talented brought to the help of the fashionable ideas of the time such devices as flying draperies, flowing locks, imploring eyes, eloquence in marble and honesty in bronze,[1] until these same ideas, through hatred of the amorous art that persisted amid all this artifice, shattered them both and, seizing upon the hearts of women and the poor, demanded a new mythology with new delusions.

We have seen the destinies of Christianity bound so strictly to the idol that today the idol defines it for us in its most living expression and its largest humanity. But the idol draws back every time that morality advances, and every time that the idol draws back Christianity, if it gains some ground in the hypocrisy of the law, loses an equal extent in the candor of the heart. The response to the sensual and spiritual orgy of the sixteenth century in England, is the other orgy of furious Puritanism, morality closing the theater in which King Lear had raved and Lady Macbeth had washed her blood-stained hands, where Coriolanus affirmed his pride, where Cleopatra and Desdemona had filled so many hearts with despair and love, where Hamlet had pierced so many minds with the fearful intoxication of doubt. We are familiar with the first effect of the Reformation in Germany, arresting point-blank the development of painting and the trades. And as for France, we see there a continuous effort of the mind to gain time over morality and turn aside its severity by secularizing the idol (under guidance of Italy), and to harass this morality with the sharp arrows of Rabelais and Montaigne, up to the day when the combined efforts of thinkers and artists should have reorganized an intellectual architecture sufficiently imposing to forbid their enemy to tread the waxed parquets, the beautiful straight alleys, the groves and glades approached by statues and pools symmetrically arranged.

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[1] Fig. 205.

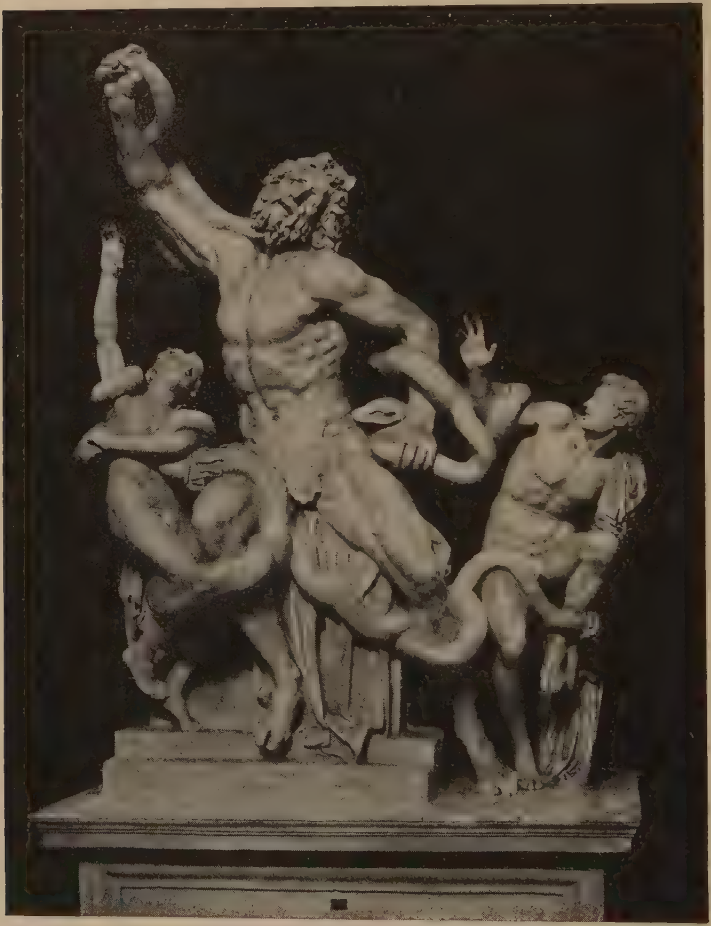

Fig. 205

Eloquence

This fashion of escaping from the yoke of morality was besides, whether one wished it or not, a phenomenon similar to morality itself, but carried from the social plane to the intellectual plane. Jansenism had a part in it. A collective discipline could never be in France what it was in Anglo-Saxon countries. Christianity in France, in the seventeenth century as much as in the thirteenth, always responded to æsthetic rather than to moral ends. The contrary was true where the Puritan ruled severely. But the superiority of the French on this terrain was dearly bought: academism corresponds to Puritanism and attempts to lead back to the common rule, by force if necessary, those who fall out of line. Colbert and Cromwell, Descartes and Hobbes, Boileau and Milton are not so far from one another: the art of poetry drives out of the Parnassian paradise those who do not obey the rules of its administration. The subordination of religion to the state does not accord ill with the subordination of the passions to the intelligence, and if in France we do not go so far as to cut off the head of a king who reads the Bible in another language than ours, we find it natural to ban an artist who has spoken with irreverence of the orthodoxy of Le Brun.

In art as in psychology, the codifying of certain illusive accents presented through the hero entails the misunderstanding of certain other accents without which the hero would not exist. Jesus is no more a moral man than Michael Angelo is an æsthetic man. Each is a creator, therefore a monster, upon whom it is impossible, without betraying him as well as ourselves, to model ourselves, even approximately. Morality arises, then Puritanism, classicism, and academism, according to the tendencies and special aptitudes of such and such a people, when this people no longer has the strength to support the great weight of life and its atrocious or sublime actions, which it performs with equal enthusiasm.

This means that these codifications are sometimes indispensable to the salvation of the multitude. They are a halt in the confusion of retreat which allows us to breathe and to hold fast to energy and love that are ready to slide into the abyss. If art appears to us as a conquering sword which enlarges indefinitely the territories of life, morality is a shield that tries to oppose the advance of death. But this shield also stifles the remnants of life covered by it and runs the risk of hiding the seeds of new life which appear here and there. The Anglo-Saxon Reformation and classicism in France had no other aim than to substitute for the organism broken by the Renaissance a rule of life and thought destined to give the world for a few moments the illusion that this organism had not ceased to exist. It thus temporarily snatches the individual from the ruins of this organism. When a great social or religious body is in its full power of creation and expansion, it has only to make rules in order to create the "good" and the "beautiful." It represents an equilibrium of forces in which antagonisms enter with the same necessity, the same ease, and also the same intoxication as the arms, legs, torso, and head of the dancer enter the harmony of the dance.

In order to live, in order to come to life again, art, like conscience, conditions an eternal becoming. Morality, like æsthetics, appeals to eternal verity. In the former there is movement and discovery through risk, in the latter a fixed certainty in the will to obey. The former springs from ourselves. The latter descend from others. The latter alone really touch men because they pass from heart to heart. Such "moral" works as have succeeded in moving us, the Gospels, for instance, or the *Pensées* of Pascal, would pass unnoticed if an irresistible artistic force did not animate them. But are these truly "moral" works? I do not think so.

III

It would be imprudent, moreover, to confuse "morality," which is merely the transposition to the social terrain of a sexual metaphysics based on original sin, with the prohibitive disciplines generally attached to religion, disciplines from which no society has been able or, we fear, will in the future be able to escape. These disciplines, all of which deal with actions that are permitted or forbidden without transcendental reasons and which do not raise hermetically sealed walls between two regions of the spiritual world, shutting them henceforth and forever away from each other, have never embarrassed the artistic development of man. On the contrary they have usually exerted a beneficent influence upon it by freeing its activities from those hesitations and indecisions that bewilder it on a terrain where it no longer knows its way, and that weaken or destroy its energy: "Behold thy God . . . ," "Do not take this field, it is your master's or your neighbor's . . . ," "Do not take this woman, she is your brother's," "Remain in the condition to which you were born, you are made for it."

The man who desires to carve the image of a young girl from some olive tree, or the head of a hawk from some block of lava, is not prevented by this from realizing his desire. But to make his salvation in this world or the next depend upon his denial of these very powers of love is what frustrates him. It is true that sometimes, when the interdiction has lasted for centuries, we witness a sort of irrepressible eruption of the poems that have accumulated during the silence of our ancestors. Which might lead us to believe that the goodness and grandeur of the majority of men is quite indifferent to God, since he often sacrifices ten or twenty generations to produce one of those miraculous vivid moments in which one generation suddenly seems in harmony with him.

From that loftier viewpoint which sees our universal adventure as a phenomenon, not isolated in time but moving, evolving, sometimes regressing throughout an indefinite period, like a living being, it is very hard to determine what may have been the effect of this or that form of social discipline upon the creative powers of the mind. Looked at externally, it all seems quite evident. It is entirely natural that the Assyrian *Sar* should construct palaces dominating the desert from afar and into which he might crowd the multitude of slaves, women, and soldiers that were destined to serve, gratify, or protect his passions. It is quite natural that the priests of Chaldea should raise high above the driving sandstorms terraces from which they might watch the circular movement of the heavenly bodies through the pure emptiness of space, and that the Hellenes, assembled for the festivals that were expressly authorized by all the constitutions of their cities, should watch with passionate interest the play of muscles under the sun-tanned skin of the athletes and their harmony of movement in running and jumping. We have no difficulty understanding why the image-maker of the thirteenth century introduces the gestures of French workmen and the forms of French flowers, into the setting, now charming, now ferocious, of the Judeo-Christian mythology that had gradually been imposed upon them by councils and bishops. Or why the Roman autocrat raised up aqueducts and paved the roads that brought wealth and life to the heart of his empire from all his scattered provinces. Why a château surrounded by gardens symbolizes a sort of political system of the intellect surrounding the French autocrat. And why scenes of household labor and landscapes in which sky and water blend, epitomize in painting the effort of the Dutch burgher to establish himself comfortably on the land which he has conquered.

But it is impossible to pretend that such or such a method of governing men will imprint such or such an accent upon this or that way they have of expressing themselves. Any enquiry on this terrain leads to widely varying results. So variable, in fact, that we wonder if our habits of mind allow us to understand the spiritual structure that has been imposed upon men by the modes of grouping and government that we call autocratic, theocratic, aristocratic, democratic; these are only labels that we apply to forms that probably correspond to nothing more than the meaning we give these words at a given time.

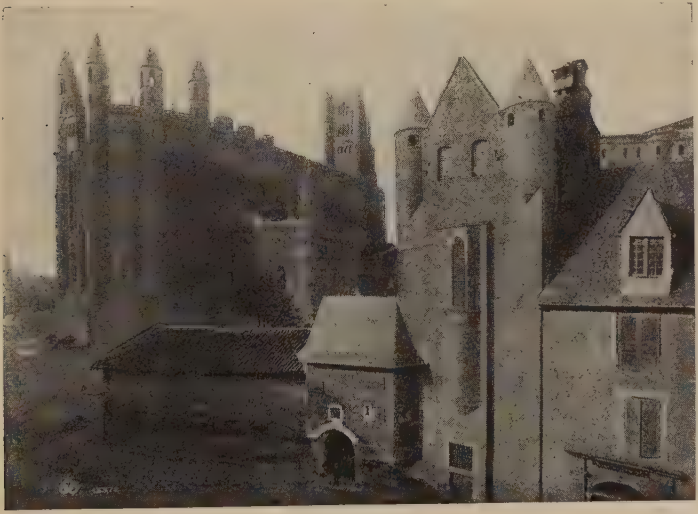

Fig. 206

Arid Surroundings, Contrasts (Albi)

A few things, however, may be stated definitely.

Tyranny does not necessarily prevent the blossoming of the poem. Liberty does not necessarily favor it. It sprang up far more vigorously in the blood-stained England of Elizabeth, than in the England that lay crushed with liberty and wealth under the trident of Victoria; more vigorously in the Spain of Philip II, where the Inquisition burned, tortured and broke upon the wheel than in parliamentary Spain where book and press were free to criticize; in the France of Louis XIV rather than that of the Directory, in feudal Japan more than in liberal Japan. On the other hand the free German cities of the thirteenth century, the small, peaceful principalities of the eighteenth bestowed lavishly upon Germany what its military strength could not give it, causing it to blossom with trades and swarm with ideas. And the Albigensian liberties did not prevent Southern France from raising its magnificent epopee of stone,[1] which, on the other hand, Ottoman despotism rendered weak in Moslem countries and obliterated entirely in the Christian lands which it occupied. If the reign of Napoleon is barren, that of Louis-Philippe shows an amazing flowering, and if from autocratic Russia, from its cities where every house bore the seal of the police, from its fields cultivated by human animals, from its ruins, from its convict prisons there rose the sound of great music together with the roar of the deepest moral abyss that literature has ever illumined, free Holland, at least for two centuries, has said nothing.

One thing only seems probable, at least from this point of view: that systems of government in which authority dominates—theocracy, autocracy, aristocracy—almost everywhere favor the rise of architecture and subordinate all other arts to it that is to a central and primitive edifice about which the crowds assemble and upon which all eyes are fixed. For example, observe the old theocracies or monarchies of the Orient, of Islam; notice the encounter, in the tenth century, of the Catholic theocracy and of the rising monarchies of the Occident in the categorical Romanesque temple which seemed to clamp to the soil a pitiless vault extended over the labor of men; see the classical age of the French. On the other hand, in all systems in which liberty dominates or tends to appear and which are generally called democratic, domestic sculpture and especially painting first invade, then stifle, then ignore architecture, because the individual finds in the play of forms, lights, shadows, and movements a medium better suited to follow step by step the infinite meanderings of feeling and ideas aroused in him by his desires and sensations.

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[1] Fig. 206.

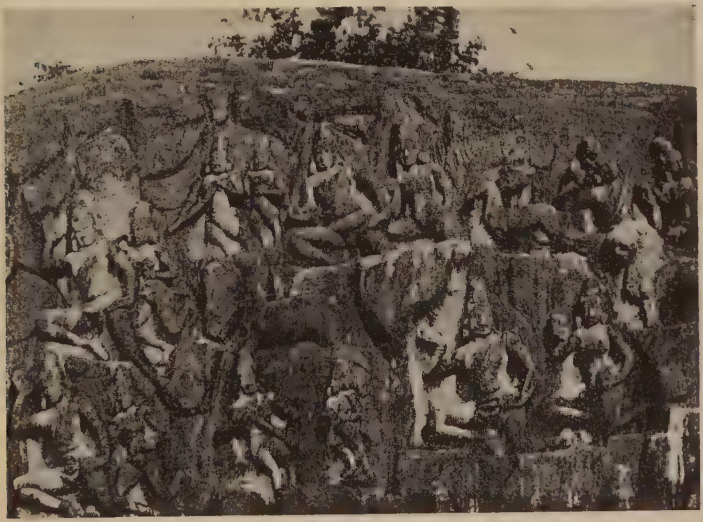

FIG. 207

CONTRADICTION, CONCILIATIONS (India)

These so-called democracies, by the way, often assume an aristocratic or corporative form, as for instance Greece after Pericles, the French Commune, the Italian Republics, the Low Countries after their liberation and France for the last hundred years. Democracy does not hinder the development of the artist, whom liberty ceaselessly goads, solicits, disturbs, leads, and launches on unexplored roads. But it hinders unity of style, which equality destroys in the monument as well, by destroying from top to bottom the hierarchical principle in all its functions and aptitudes. Perhaps we should see in the art of India a sort of tragic oscillation between these opposed poles. The régime of castes reigns there, rigid as iron; but the free play of instinct which it permits the multitudes that flood its social strata in a muddy, foaming torrent, imprints a hybrid form upon its entire art. The processes of contrasts, illumination, passages, and values proper to painting force the very stone, in its monumental setting, to obey the slightest sensual impulses of all the individuals.[1]

IV

If the political and moral order can be the occasion of a work of art, it is never, in any case, its determining cause. It is, like it, the effect of anterior forces that flow over and through them both only to outlast them and take shape, later, in fresh poems. The idea of attaining perfection, which animated all Greek art on the physical plane[2] and which Christianity seized upon and transferred to the moral plane, has no doubt a decisive influence upon the orientation of crowds and the effort which it demands of them. But if it was able to give—at one time to Greek art, at another to Puritan energy—a unique accent, one that was appropriate, for an hour, to the race or the epoch, it has the most disastrous effect conceivable if we pretend to extend its too limited rôle to all civilizations, to "civilization" itself. It cuts off half of our spiritual universe, condemns anthropomorphism to define an image that is indeed splendid but destined to quickly encounter, on all sides, limits that cannot be surpassed, and forces morality to deny the fecundity of the passions in order to attain a negative virtue which is speedily deserted by curiosity and imagination.

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[1] Figs. 39, 131, 132, 177, 178, 207, 216.

[2] Figs. 85, 208.

The idea of indefinite progress which attaches to it is, moreover, contradictory to it, since nothing exists beyond perfect beauty and perfect virtue. And the one is just as powerless as the other to justify or even explain the historic rôle of the grandiose civilizations—of Egypt, Chaldea, China, India, Islam, Mexico, Peru, or even the mediæval Christianity of the Occident—all of which have loaned to them or borrowed from them necessary elements, but which have developed and spread independently of them and have exercised a universal influence at least as profound and durable as theirs. What am I saying? Between those forms of art and association that have arisen from typical Oriental civilizations, dominated by the idea of fatalism, and those that have sprung from typical Occidental civilizations, haunted by the ideas of perfection and progress, there exists a contradiction that would be irreconcilable if both held rigorously to the structure of their systems and did not succeed, unwittingly, in breaking them at every instant. Oriental fatalism, denying the necessity of effort, should logically end in abolishing the civilizing idol that necessitates much labor when it comes to giving a gigantic rock the form of this idol. Occidental progress, denying the necessity of mystical imagination, should logically end by raising to the rank of idols the office chair of the bureaucrat;

the palm of the academician, the black coat of the preacher and the furnace of the engineer. For mystical imagination, alone, surpasses visible form and rigid morality and so ceaselessly widens the association of spiritual symbolism with the infinite world of forms that stirs in our desires.

Happily, in both cases, there exists the amorous force of races, and it is this which resists the idea of perfection or which conquers the fatalistic idea in order to realize its poem through any means whatever. It is this which has created each of those successive epic poems that constitute the history of great peoples and the ensemble of which constitute history itself. It has found expression in spite of the metaphysics that would condemn it to inertia, in spite of moralities that would lead it to the absolute. These epic poems bear in themselves their past and their future. Not only are they never re-lived but they are never even continued. When some brutal event, some war of extermination, for instance, does not cut down their roots or tear off their blossoms they grow and disappear, leaving their task finished. Nor can any other epopee replace them by beginning where they ceased, but only by reassembling the scattered elements of the world and imposing a new order upon them.

Of course every form of art can and should sooner or later penetrate the neighboring form, or the following form, or some other form which will appear in the more distant future. But it is fulfilled in itself, with its powers and its defeats, quite as if it were a living being. It is born, it expresses itself, it dies. That is all. It is not, in any case, an advance over the preceding form, and if it is sometimes more beautiful, that is because the race that imposes it has been more favored. It can also be less beautiful, less expressive, rather. We should once for all renounce this idea of the beautiful,

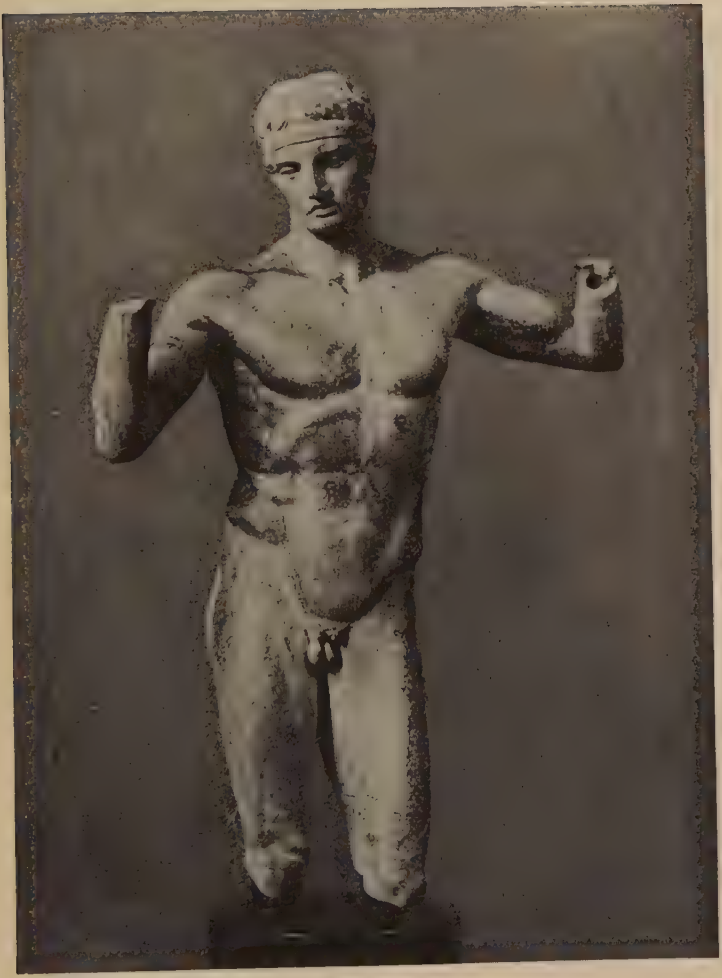

Fig. 208

Borderland of Perfection (Athenian Art, v Century) bound up with the idea of the perfect, which limits the sensations of man and emasculates the power of the creator. The child, also, may be superior to his father or to his more distant ancestor, but he finds in heredity, chance, circumstances, many excellent reasons for remaining inferior to them.

Progress, in short, reduces itself to differences. Dutch art, as a whole, and in spite of its vivid and truculent flavor, is certainly less moving than Egyptian art as a whole. Japanese art, the child of Chinese art, is slender and caricaturish compared to it. The art of the conquering Britain is meager—aside from the poets—if we compare it with that of the Hindu slave. Italian art since Michael Angelo is not so great as it was before his time, and the once powerful Christian art is now no more than a sick hireling accomplishing its labor without pleasure. "Progress," if it does actually exist outside man's stock of tools, has nothing in common with art. Art can indeed acquire from age to age a larger complexity and can use the perfection of the stock of tools to explore new sensations and live new dramas, but every collective or individual manifestation of it is self-sufficient and erects on the road of the nations the only really visible and expressive milestones of their task that we can recognize.

In fact, if art endures it is because it, alone, unites, while morality on the contrary divides. All true civilization is a lyric phenomenon where knowledge and becoming rise and reign together. Art is civilization's highest peak which life does not succeed in scaling unless it accepts fearlessly the elements of energy and love which all our instincts impose upon it. The successive moralities, morality itself, only exist as functions of this poem which they betray when they pretend to lead and inspire it. If we are willing to include among the poets those who express themselves masterfully in ideas and actions then we can truly say that it is the poet, alone, who finds analogies, classifies values, and discovers passages leading to unity. He is nothing unless lyricism harmonizes and rises with him. And, if he so wishes, morality itself, which he subdues even while enjoying it. Outside of lyricism there is nothing but servitude. He who obeys only reason knows nothing of wisdom. He who obeys only sensual impulses knows nothing of liberty. Lyricism is the ascendent life in which the passional powers and the spiritual powers, affirming and fortifying themselves through one another, deliver the flame from the altar to the poet. It is he whose task is to abolish contradictions by discovering their point of equilibrium about which he oscillates tragically during the whole conquering life of the race, and which he attains and determines only for the space of a lightning-flash.

V

It follows that art which is nourished on the passions so that it incorporates them alive in the harmony of its substance, conditions tragedy. We have seen, in connection with morality, that the foundations of every one of its great edifices sink deep into an abyss of horrors. But this fact becomes still more impressive when we take up the matter chronologically and discover that the birth and youth of the most representative artists of the race coincide, almost everywhere, with the most sanguinary convulsions which this race has undergone. We know that Hellenic art, which at all times sprang up on a terrain furrowed by the fury of politics and war, attained its most stable point of equilibrium when the generation that was present at the Medic wars ripened. It was these wars that gave his first childhood impressions to the great sculptor of the Olympia, inasmuch as the "Combat of the Centaurs and the Lapithae" was raised to the pediment of the temple some twenty-five years after them.

We know that Phidias was born the year of Marathon, where Æschylus fought and where Pindar might have fought, and when Pericles and Sophocles were four and five years old. We know that Euripides and Democritus were born the year of Salamis, when Herodotus was four years old. We know that Thucydides, Socrates, Hippocrates, Alcibiades, and Aristophanes were the sons of those who saw the burning of Athens and who drove Persia back into the sea. We know that the most fruitful part of their lives took place during the horrible Peloponnesian War, when Plato, Xenophon, Parrhasius, Zeuxis, Scopas appeared, and from the ruins of which rose Aristotle and Demosthenes.

We know that, much nearer to our own times, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, the astonishing multitude of Italian artists was born, grew up, worked and died among the furious quarrels of the Republican cities and while Venice was extending her victorious sway over the seas. We know that the art of Spain, which lasted a hundred and fifty years, had the explosive character of its military and colonial expansion and appeared suddenly, at the same time. We know that the "golden age" of English literature is also the most atrocious age of English history, war without, war within, the brutal rise of the Reformation, and that the cradle of Shakespeare floated on a river of blood. We know that all the painters of Holland, silent before and since, were born between the extreme dates of the frightful insurrection of the Low Countries and in the twenty years that followed the re-conquest and the possession of their homes by the conquerors. We know that the great romantic generation, without a single exception: Stendhal, Ingres, Rude, Géricault, Corot, Barye, Balzac, Delacroix, Hugo, Berlioz, Dumas, Michelet, Comte, Daumier in France, and elsewhere, in countries that suffered from the same storm, Weber, Schopenhauer, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Richard Wagner, Chopin, Byron, Shelley, Carlyle, were born and grew up between the outset and the end of the military expansion of the Revolution and of the French Empire. These are facts, of which I cite only the most impressive.[1] It seems as if each of the poignant crises in which the existence of a group of men, its needs, customs, and modes of association, is brought into play suddenly by the political drama or by the drama of war, were followed by an explosion of spiritual energy that absorbs its fury and anxiety so as to create and nourish great imaginations.

This is natural. Danger, terror, anguish, moral and material suffering are everywhere. In the midst of all this the child appears, testimony of violent raptures and unexpected deaths, of the daily tragedy that includes his mother's tears and his father's cowardice or bravery, in which his brother is handed over to the executioner, his sister to the soldiers. The child grows up wild, secretive, obliged to dissimulate what he knows and what he feels, and learns to accept ecstasy or disaster as the ordinary ailment of his imagination, learns to choose alone a burning road at an age when an easy road or a blind alley is usually chosen for him, learns to welcome responsibility and risk as his companions in play. Very young he has acquired, along with a sovereign indifference in the face of events, the most terrible of which are the most normal for him, a habit of meditation that makes him stand silent and motionless before a flower on the edge of the road, and that opens strange depths in him as soon as he meets with love. And how can we describe the subtlety and power of the ferment that can rise in the flanks of man and woman in the sometimes unique embrace in which both, after being borne in despair and tears, to the supreme exalta-

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[1] I refer those who would study this phenomenon more closely to my book, *The Dance Over Fire and Water*, and, more especially, to the chapter "Tragedy, Mother of the Arts."

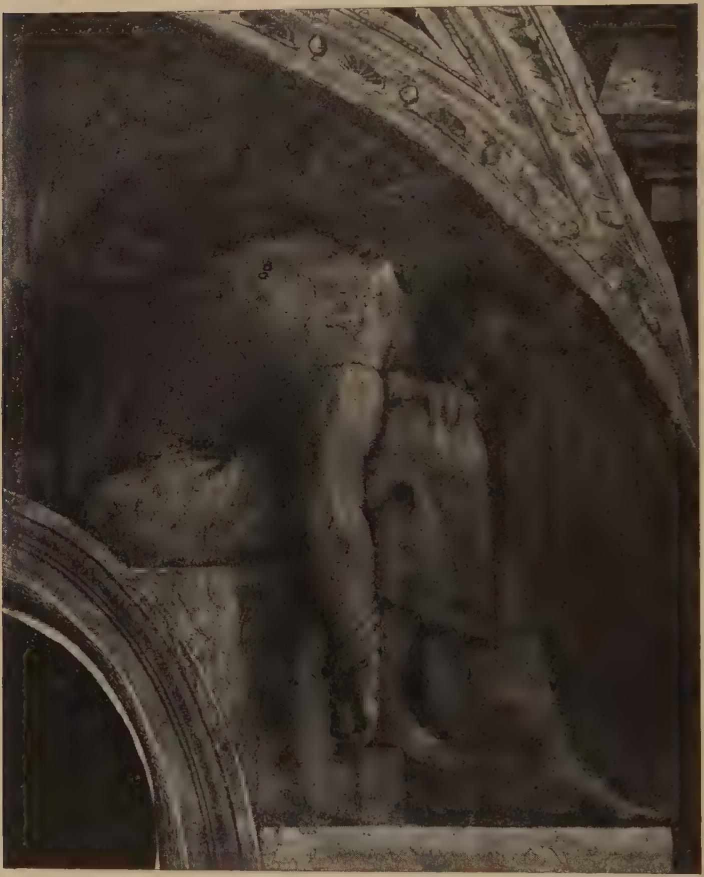

FIG. 209
TRAGEDY (Michael Angelo)

tion of amorous delirium, are torn from each other by the tocsin or the drum?

It is true that one objection is possible. Do not the apogee of art and the apogee of violence both depend upon the same anterior causes, on the irresistible rise in the race of energy and love which bursts forth at the same moment and expresses its supreme unity in two ways at once, that of instinctive forces obeying their frenzy and that of spiritual forces obeying their lyric essence? It is possible, but they seem to condition each other, and if the spirit of war and the spirit of revolution should disappear one day from the city of men I can imagine, dimly, some sort of collective drama that would fulfill in us the task which the spirit of war and of revolt have hitherto assumed, so cruelly but so magnificently. Such a drama might, indeed, avoid bloodshed, but it would overwhelm all human beings with rapture, anguish, anger, or pain; it would be a passional drama in which the entire race participated. Love even—perhaps especially—when it does not shed blood plays best this rôle in the individual, through its furious lyric exaltation, its poignant alternations of despair and intoxication, the immense void which it leaves when it passes and which art and action rush to fill. But this sort of love is not known to every one. Far from it! And it cannot replace in the entire species the universal tragedy that bears man and woman, through their acts, through their thoughts, through their sensations, through their sentiments, through their generative power into regions of spiritual energy and anxiety the existence of which had not been even suspected, previously, by most of them.

The drama, of course, still exists in times of peace in the conflicts of passions and interests, but it is diffused, sullen, deadened, and makes no deep impression on the receptive soul of a child, who grasps it not much better than the unreceptive souls of almost all men grasp the silent drama of the courses of the stars, for example. Yet the latter is a terrible drama, the most terrible of all—an interminable and aimless course in the void, the cold, the night that has no dawn. And even if the poet suffers, even if he knows perfectly that every stroke of the chisel, every strophe, every harmony of his is won from the silent drama represented by the conflict between his thought and the solicitations of things, the torments of love, the feeling of annihilation—even so, does he realize that every stroke of the chisel, every strophe, every harmony also introduces a new drama into the world? Sensibilities awakened by him, understanding that has been bewildered, enthusiasms newly roused, communions suddenly created, the meetings of minds, the meetings of hearts, discussions, theories, systems, a whirlwind of youthful forces rises at his steps! Conflicts are born. Strong currents of ideas appear and flow from the æsthetic plane to the sentimental plane, from the sentimental plane to the social or political plane, and multitudes are roused because a single man has spoken. It is easy, of course, to see that the word of Jesus has released torrents of blood that are ever growing larger. But how can we avoid seeing that Michael Angelo, also, has made innumerable victims, not only by giving rise to imitators and plagiarists, but by laying on the threshold of the modern world, which dates from himself, the fundamental tragedy of the spirit,[1] which is to destroy mysticism through knowledge and then, having reached the limits of knowledge, to have no choice save between mysticism and death?

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[1] Fig. 209.

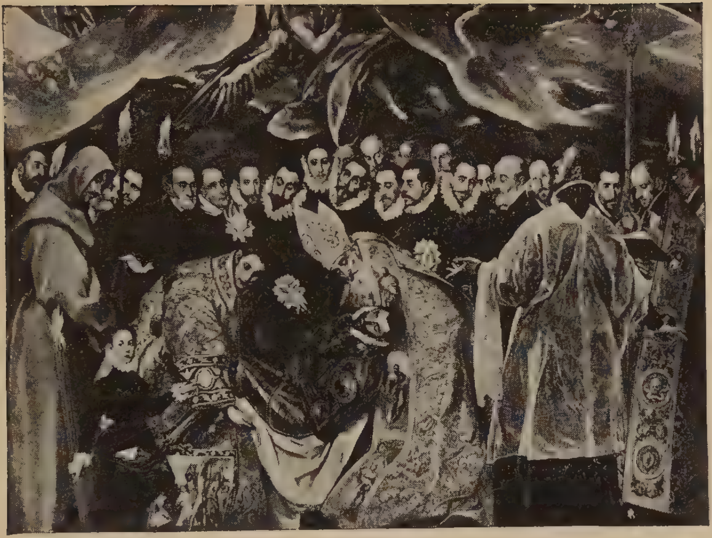

FIG. 210
GRECO

Chapter X. UTILIZATION OF DEATH

I

WE FIND ourselves, then, on the verge of the abyss of fundamental pessimism. Art does not bear witness to the truth of religions which, quite on the contrary, are nourished on its substance and grow anæmic or die when it abandons them to bestow its love elsewhere. It has nothing to do with any social finality whatever since, high as it ascends, it has never been able to maintain at this height that political equilibrium of which it constitutes, no doubt, only an ideal image, impossible even to determine, and since the pretended instrument of this equilibrium, "morality," reigns only over the ruins of art and flees the moment it reappears.

Even if its material realization may be favored during one or two generations, by peace, and the general well-being, art sinks its roots into the drama of history and does not appear even conceivable unless man lives constantly in a state of inner war against the excessive violence of his instincts of conquest or the excessive calm of his needs for security. It is antisocial from the optimistic point of view that is taken by society—at least by Occidental society—that of the pursuit of an indefinite perfection of universal happiness, which is troubled by its imaginative constructions, and of universal repose, which is disturbed by its perpetual evolution. It is often immoral and especially through its inexorable exaltation of love. It is always unmoral since it seeks to draw from events and objects harmonies that are quite independent of the sentimental quality which moralists see in these objects and these events. It is cruel, even when it is tender, and indeed this is most often the case, cruel like the civilization which it represents and symbolizes; since in order to realize its proper equilibrium it accepts, like it, to explore unreservedly the redoubtable domain of the passions. It is constantly preoccupied with death,[1] before which it alone dances, while everything except itself trembles, recoils, dissimulates, or drops its tools at the sight of it. If feeds on its own rapture in catching for a second the semblance of things, and on its despair that this semblance dissolves the second after.

When its mysticism is exhausted it turns to knowledge and quickly runs over its rigorously closed circle, beyond which the empire of mysticism and of annihilation begin again. It is helpless before this state of affairs. It alone knows that it is thus helpless since it is content to exist on condition that it wanders neither to one side nor to the other of its own path. It is great only in the measure of its lyric fervor and in its power of describing and expressing. It is when the general energy and faith in one's own strength ebb that art defines and demonstrates, and it is then that the hero, whose energy and

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[1] Fig. 211.

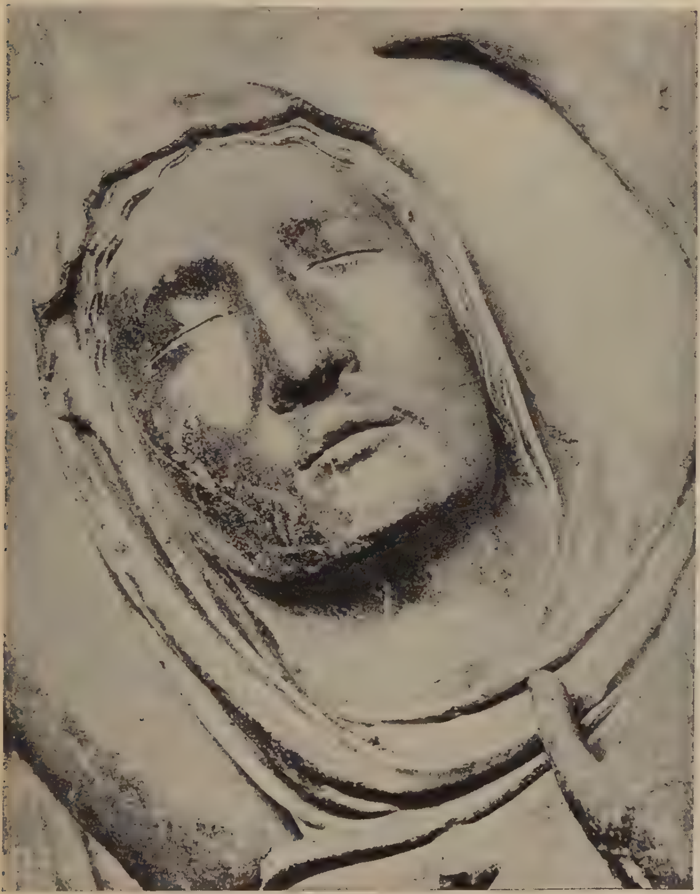

Fig. 211
The Game with Death (Chartres)

faith have persisted, appears as the one who accepts unconditionally. Art is the only thing that expects nothing of life but life itself, and seeks no recompense save in its own free functioning or, as the last extreme, in death.

Nor does it find anything but a derisive consolation in the hypothetical sanctions life offers and that can be accepted only at its great universal moments of fervor and expansion by simple souls who meet with some religion on their road. When art inhabits a truly heroic heart then the vision of annihilation rises from this heart together with the vision of terrestrial and spiritual magnificence and mingles with them in a confused rapture of admiration and horror. Even the idea of the indefinite survival of his poem can only, at very

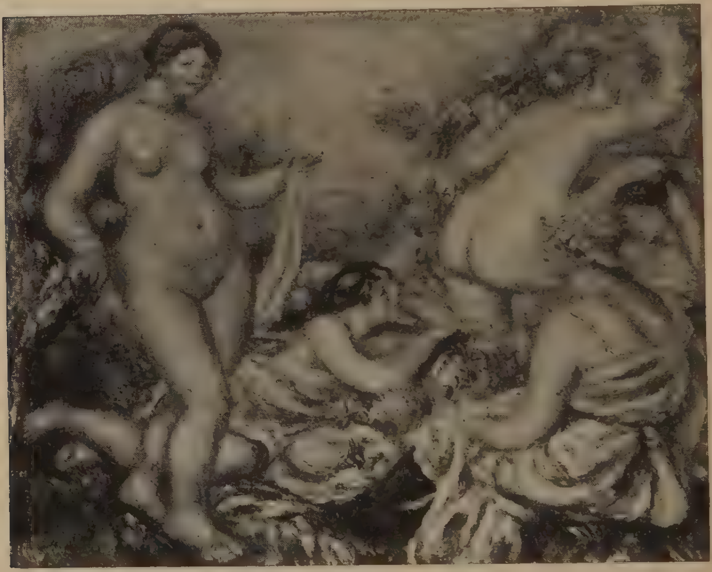

Fig. 212

The Game with Love (Painting by Renoir at the age of 78 years) brief instants, console a great soul. He knows that a few centuries or a few millenniums will be enough to efface it, if humanity continues to grow in power and possibilities. He knows that museums are funereal places where the crowd does not enter, that frescos only five centuries old crumble to dust from minute to minute on the walls of the Campo Santo, that at every hour and throughout the world the stone of a temple falls, that every day ivy and grass entomb a god. He knows that an idiom changes, then dies, and that the spirit of literature evaporates in passing from one language to another. He knows that even music demands interpreters whose future associations will inperceptibly change the symphony by reason of the gradual modification of individual or collective needs. He knows that of most living works there will remain, some day, only the biography of their author in some encyclopædia, and that since encyclopædias overflow with material, eventually the name alone will survive. And even should this name survive as long as there were men, though frozen in a sonorousness that had never an echo, he knows that one day there will no longer be a single man to be nourished on it, when the dead earth swings about the dead sun.

In short the whole of art is a symbolic representation, in the life of the species, of the drama of love that transfigures and overwhelms the life of the individual. Its poignant illusion endures as long, in regard to the life of the species, as endures, in regard to the life of the individual, the formidable flood of sensations, sentiments, and power that are brought him by love. And this flood appears, renews itself, or fails according to the quality of the imagination or the amorous strength that heredity, circumstances, and chance have imposed on the species as well as upon the individual. Art has love's atrocious cruelty, disdaining today the form it has most worshiped and toiled over so that it may love another tomorrow. It has love's faculty of becoming incarnate in many successive forms. Sometimes, like love, it meets no beloved form on its way or—monstrous phenomenon!—does not seek to meet one. For certain peoples in regard to art, like certain individuals in regard to love, live out their lives in the most gloomy silence. Like love, finally, it seeks out and transfigures the most dissimilar forms, which by turns obey and resemble only its own intrinsic nature.

Art assumes in the face of death the same attitude as love. It has love's terrible uselessness and importance, and that accent of mingled ecstasy and terror with which it speaks in the loftiest hearts. Ecstasy that arouses in us the power to create life, together with all its wandering energies, but which endures in the senses only for the space of an hour, in the soul only for the space of a few years and which saturates the consciousness of its end with terror. As with the growth of love, the growth of art is perhaps more intoxicating than its fugitive but total possession. As with the decline of love, the decline of art is perhaps sadder than its total but fugitive possession is painful. The act of creation, in the flesh as in the spirit, is the most lyrical, perhaps the only truly lyrical of our acts. Nevertheless this act, in the last analysis, serves only to foster death.

II

Art is therefore a game, as the philosophers have called it. It is a matter of dancing on the edge of the abyss or hiding it with flowers. It is a game which, apart from the quality of its result, gives to men as great as Michael Angelo, Shakespeare, Rembrandt, or Beethoven an impulse as irresistible as that which leads the young child, like the young animal, to frisk, leap, and squeal in the sunny meadows, the little boy to play at bases, the little girl with dolls, the statesman to flatter the passions of the people so that he may begin or end a war, the professional soldiers to make war well or ill, the judge to demand men's heads, and the lawyer to dispute them with him, the doctor to watch over the recovery of health, or the rupture of the functional balances that make and unmake health, the broker to force market values up or down, the astronomer to foresee the date of eclipses, the drunkard to become intoxicated, the citizen to vote, the lover of adventure to launch himself into the air or to plunge under the waves, the idler to join the idler about a green table where little rakes heap up the black and red chips and the clicking of the ivory dice mingles with the crackling of paper.

It has been given to some men of my generation to know an old man, entirely ossified in his joints, who could not get up, sit down, or lie down alone and who with a brush tied to his stiffened hand created ceaselessly roses, anemones, red fruits, the flesh of women and children, whose contours seemed to be kneaded and caressed by blood mingled with light. This petrified old man, who had never expected anything of death, who no longer expected anything of life, played, simply played, and as it was impossible for him to cultivate any other game one would have said that the more complete became his physical ruin the more increased from hour to hour the dance, leaps, and caprices of his mind, its irrepressible youth and ardent search for egoistical pleasures. Now, an old dog never plays. But Renoir demonstrated, merely by his endless playing, that his game alone places and defines the inner man in the face of death.[1]

But this game is not disinterested. Even if we confined ourselves to this singular example we should see at once that man, merely because he thinks, has acquired the particular faculty of being bored, that in order to avoid boredom he invented the game—well before the seventh day, probably on the first!—and that at certain moments when the ennui was too difficult to overcome he had even gone so far as to accept morality, which is also, perhaps, only a game. Indeed the game is not always directly useless. Sometimes, with apologies to Kant, it has its aims. There is architecture from which all the arts have emerged, as the leaves, twigs, and branches spring from the trunk sunk in the soil. There is the crude shelter of the first men, perfected from age to age, there is the venerable house, cradle of fire, cradle of the family, cradle of the trades, cradle of the city, cradle of the race, cradle of the mind. There is the art of the Roman engineer,[1] which is beautiful only as it is useful, in which the road, the bridge, the aqueduct, the circus, the theater dispose their naked planes and their categorical masses in tiers, as if to subdue space to the domination of the most imperious needs of man. Yet this art becomes ugly and almost ridiculous the moment it is disinterested, for example in the temple which in Roman art, does not respond either to a deep popular sentiment or to a social system that was nevertheless very definite.

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[1] Fig. 105 A, 212.

Placed the whole length of the human adventure by the urgent need to endure, to communicate, to resist, to conquer are man's enduring milestones—harsh Italian palaces, making their native towns bristle with towers, the military walls of Vauban, the bridges and roads of France, lighthouses revolving above shimmering waters, tunnels piercing enormous masses of rock. And in our own day we have those American factories that raise their salient profiles and their giant cupo-

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[1] Figs. 34, 127, 213.

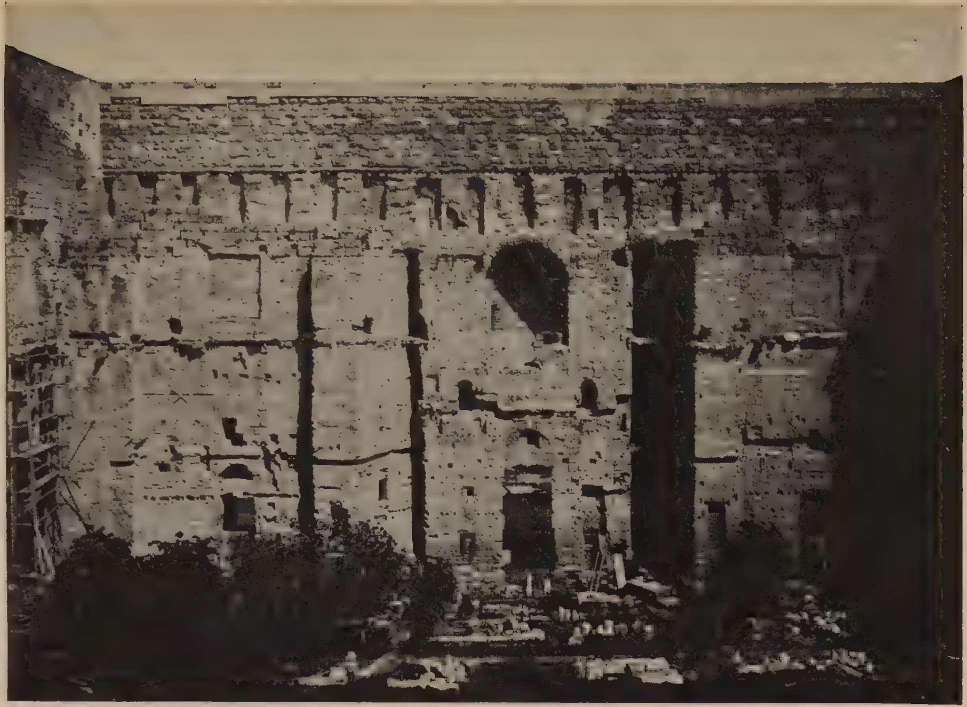

Fig. 213

Utilitarian Architecture (Orange)

las over the plains and cities, their flesh cement, their bones and muscles of iron, their joints exact, their work performed in a humming, mechanical silence. There is that mute flight of belts and pulleys, the coming and going of the pistons and cranks, sure of their unconscious and interlaced harmony—such music and dancing as should indeed take place under the ogival vaults, the stony nerves and the light co-ordinates that sustain and cradle the structure in space. There is that new architecture, the only living one today, of machines that possess and express both the violent life of animal organisms and the cold calculation of science. Locomotives, ships, airplanes, launched amid crackling electric sparks and fantastic flashes of light, throw out their chests to cleave the atmosphere, spread their wings to overcome weight and hide in

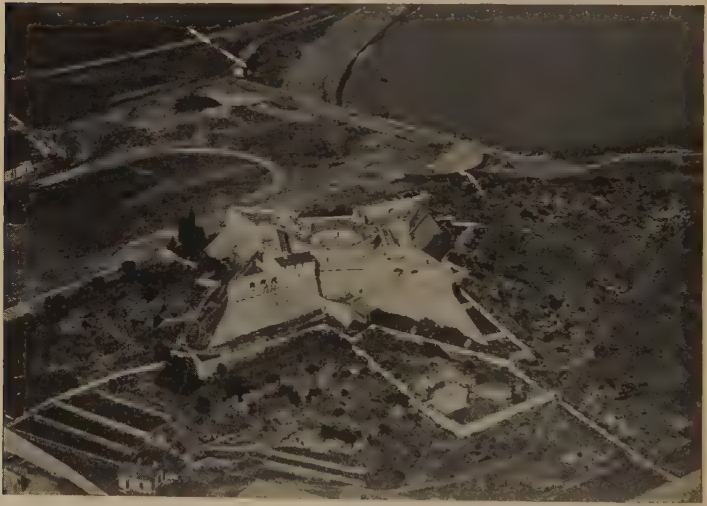

Fig. 214
Utilitarian Architecture (Vauban)

their secret bellies, under their iron skins, fire that circulates through their viscera.[1]

Science? No doubt. But arousing emotions that compare with those we get from some prelude of Bach, or from an Egyptian or Greek temple when the drowsy dynamism suddenly comes to life and sends a quiver over its surfaces. Architecture is science first of all, nothing but science, and all the arts, in detaching themselves from it, lose their power of expression in the measure that the spirit of artifice triumphs over the spirit of geometry, gradually destroying it, causing it to sink in its turn, stifled in fripperies, and in the last analysis destroying architecture with it.

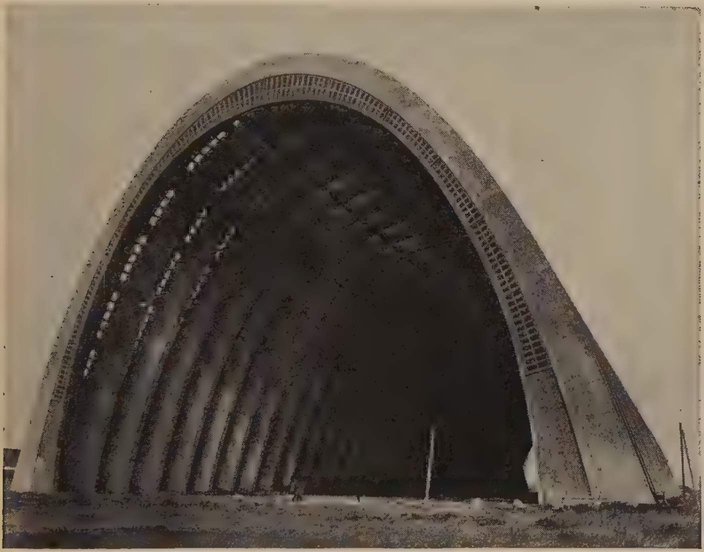

Fig. 215

Utilitarian Architecture

(Limousine & Cie., Freyssinet, Engineer; Orly, France)

It seems that architecture and the machine—like furniture (which is architecture also), like pots and all the objects of the household and the home—draw the impression of harmony which they give from an adaptation of function as perfect as possible; it seems that, in architecture and the machine, there springs from the marriage of biology and geometrical theory an intermediate being that partakes of both. But it would be dangerous to attempt to include entirely in these somewhat rigid definitions all the later developments that have sprung from construction. Strictly speaking, Greek sculpture at its highest point fulfills, almost alone, the complete requirements of function. Its anatomical perfection undoubtedly does this, but only to strike against limits that it has never been able to surpass, from which comes both its beauty and its weakness.

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[1] Figs. 35, 71, 168, 215, 218.

All the rest, Egyptian statuary whose long rhythmic waves incorporate all the spirituality of the block in light, Chinese painting, in which immensity gathers about a bird ruffling its feathers at dawn, Hindu bas-reliefs, stirring eternally, the great symphonic painting that introduces in the Occident the sense of the universal communion of movements and forms, the whole of music and poetry—all the rest rise and sink in imaginary regions much more complex and confused. At the most we can find the principle of adaptation in the intoxication they arouse in the intelligence and the sensibilities to which they offer a sudden intuitive view of the universal conditions of life. Every great work, in fact, gives a feeling of enthusiastic security which affirms the accord of man's developing mind with some fugitive appearance that has been caught for all eternity. The mind and the appearance change, but the artist has caught a point of meeting so stable that thirty centuries after, or the day after, man has the vivid impression that he possessed the universe in the second when he reached this point.

III

We can then affirm that art, the theater of which is the love of life and the instinct of its vanity, is at once the most tragic and the most useful of our games, more tragic than hunger, which only wrings our entrails, more useful than bread which feeds the flame that lights the road that leads to where bread grows. Even when the Egyptian painter works in the shadows, decorating with brilliant pictures walls that will never see daylight, even when the carver of images buries figurines and urns in funeral caves, even when an architect borders a gigantic river with two lines of tombs—even then they are at play, and the more paradoxical their play is, the more built over an abyss, the more determinedly bent on its preoccupation with death, then the more necessary it is to maintain and increase man's spirituality. Even the pyramids are useful, not only because they undoubtedly served as a cosmographical instrument for the Egyptian priests, but through the very quality of their harmonic proportions, through the effort of science and patience that their building represents, and because they represent the reign of intelligence over original disorder.

It is not the object of art to conquer the passions—that is the affair of morality—but rather to order them, through the deep need of the will to power, that is itself a passion. Amid broken and chaotic appearances, amid broken and chaotic impulses, art intervenes to create a spiritual order and make a coherent structure of our entire moral and social life, from the primitive dance up to great poetry, by means of all the peaceful or violent games of the individual or of the collective body, through sculpture and painting, architecture and music, war itself and government.

Greek polytheism may invent, through tragedy and plastic art, a system of relations that gives universal life the appearance of a world built up like an argument.

Hindu pantheism[1] may cause forces to be born of one another or die of one another in the ceaseless movement of forms that rise up out of immense confusion, only to immediately sink back into it. The transformism of the Venetians and of Rubens may find in each of the thousand harmonies of an immense painting an echo of all the others, which Rembrandt may unite and blend in the single glance of a man, mingling the flesh, bones, and blood with the flame of the spirit. The fact remains that where there was anarchy there is now order, where there was sensation there is intelligence, where there was uncertainty there is security. It scarcely matters, after all, that the unity and the continuity of style which an artist, a generation of artists or a whole race imposes upon life should be only an illusion introduced by us into the world for our personal use, for it is of this illusion that our power is built. This illusion which constitutes the object of our love and what we believe to be its aim, is only a phantom indeed, a pretext if you will, but it is certainly the most necessary of all. This illusion leads us to the sole reality, I mean the energy that drives us to seek love, so as to experience it to its depths.

The sole reality! Our power is a living thing. It, alone, is not a snare; it makes us what we are and what we become. But its pretended ends are chimerical. At the very moment when we deify it by building temples to it, by dedicating statues to it, by drawing symphonies and paintings from it, we believe this god that we are creating to be external to it. It is in us, entirely in us. The forms which our desire gives it only exteriorize for an hour the exaltation with which its presence fills us. Art is only the symbol of a fugitive image that we shall never reach but the desire for which maintains our heart at the summit of a universal life

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[1] Fig. 216.

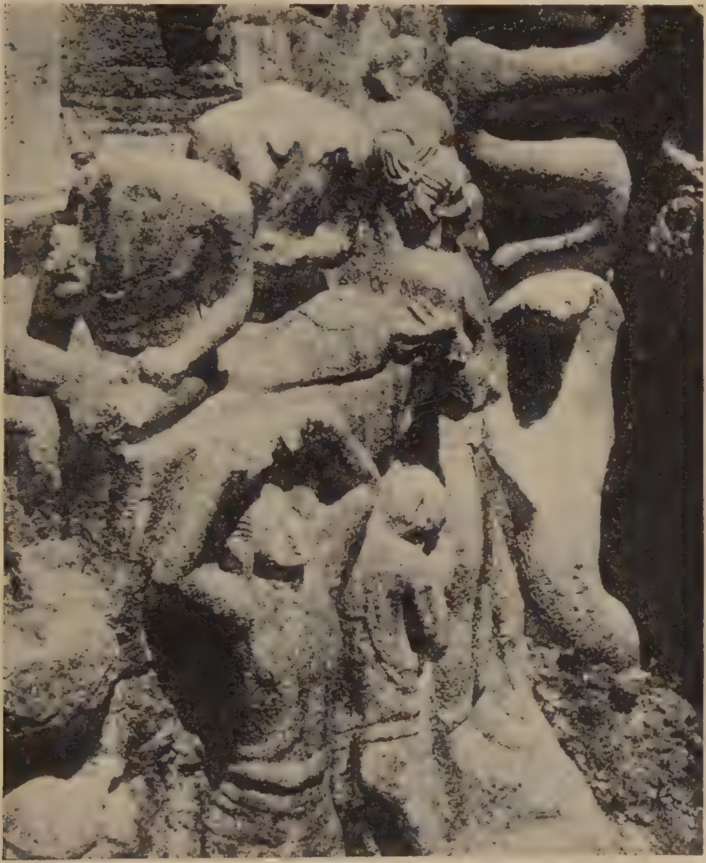

FIG. 216

PLASTIC TRANSMIGRATION; PANTHEISTIC SURROUNDINGS (India) that rises unceasingly. Thanks to it our effort is probably immortal. It suffers eclipses, of course, but it springs up elsewhere when it fails here, it increases suddenly here when it doubts or hesitates elsewhere, and through its vital necessity it assures to the lyric illusion the rôle that art plays daily in the world of the imagination. Man must persist on his tragic road, merely in order to live, for it matters little that death awaits him at the end of the road, him and all those to come, if only he has the strength to follow it with bloodstained feet and his two eyes raised toward the spring on the height. He sees the blood on his feet only when he no longer sees the spring, and the truth that destroys the mirage is so insupportable that he draws from it and from it alone the new mirage that will uphold him. The wounds of Christ are the wounds of the ancient world, and yet the Christian world has built upon them its monumental fairyland and drawn from them its prodigious poetry of love, as the Buddhist world has raised its gentle power on the breast of Brahma ravaged by carnage, as the future world will create its unknown poem on the pitiless truths revealed by the monuments sprung from the Renaissance and carried by science, industry, and war to their paroxysm of cruelty.

The conquest of an equilibrium is much more moving than its full possession. The life of Michael Angelo, for example, or of Beethoven, is an admirable symbol of this desperate pursuit which forbids man to halt in his path under pain of immediate decay and death, surrounded by ennui. Never for more than a second did they attain that superior harmony in which the peace of the heart begins and from which spring the rivers of delight. Every moment some force in them surpassed and destroyed some other, and it was only amid tremblings and occasional crashes that the formidable edifice reared its spiritual towers and its banners ever fluttered by the storm, in which the dramatic destiny of humanity rises and quivers with the pride of knowing itself without hope and yet necessary to its own consolation. The grandeur of man lies precisely in this unconquerable pride which drives him toward a summit, fortunately inaccessible, and gives him the rapture of the soul assured of conquering but whose victory has not brought with it the weariness of combat.

IV

Man, nevertheless, is not cruel. But he only reaches the height of his noblest powers by obeying the obscure forces that ceaselessly compel him to use inexorable control when faced with his natural indolence and the false security felt by his fellows who remain in the old road hollowed by those who have lived. Love, art, science, the idea, action, civilization, it is these idols, and not man himself, that tear and torment man. The cruelty of the gods appears in the perpetual necessity of effort which they inflict on his spirit. The fact that the blacks begin to die off the moment the whites appear, does not mean that the whites are systematically trying to kill the blacks. It means that one mode of civilization has lost the power to resist another, its customs, its works, its morality, its poisons, because all its powers of struggle, resistance, and expansion have been turned in another direction and employed in other circumstances. When a Hindu poet accuses the brutality of the European, his fury for war and external destruction, has he sufficiently meditated on the fury of war and inner destruction of his own race—that frightful indifference to every useful end from which spring fanaticism, epidemics, famine, the unmeasured and devastating fecundity of life and death? Is it the fault of changing Europe that China does not change? And if Japan snatches its arms from Europe in order to strike it, is that the fault of Japan? Which is the more guilty, ancient Mexico watering its idols with its own blood, or Spain watering its idols with Mexican blood? And which should we praise, republican Rome imposing peace and order through war, or imperial Rome provoking disorder and war through peace? Must we invoke liberty in order to justify revolution which practices terrorization in the name of liberty? Should we not, when we condemn the terror, think of those autocracies that threaten with terror in order to protect liberty?

Forces oppose forces, and that is all. If one of them prevails, the other destroys its vices. But if it had not had those vices would it have exercised its virtues? And if the virtues of the other had equaled its own would it have conquered? The cruelty of the gods is holy. And we know it well, all of us, since we invent the gods. The Greek idol succeeds to the African idol, the Asiatic and European succeed to the Greek idol. The European and Asiatic idol influence each other by turns so as to reawaken the flame of illusion in those who are beginning to lose the heroism needed for living. Man can only choose between suicide and effort; the high function of art is to give this effort the accent of enthusiasm of which morality deprives it, and to tirelessly replace a living heart in the breast of death.

Wagner who, as I believe, had arrived half way between the fundamental pessimism of Schopenhauer and the tragic optimism of Nietzsche, left religion and morality to the masses and gave art to those strong souls who reject happiness as unworthy of them and forge for their use a system of illusion built upon despair. It is only suitable for times similar to those in which he lived himself, times when all values are questioned, and rare, clairvoyant men are faced with the somber truth. Nevertheless there are hours in the life of a people when, reaching the peak of creative energy, they possess at once an incomparable intoxication of æsthetic activity and the illusion that exercise of this activity assures them happiness beyond the tomb. These universal miracles correspond, we have seen, to the crises of love that transform the life of individuals, and cause cathedrals, mosques, and pagodas to rise from plains, from wooded slopes, from deserts, and from swampy forests. They express the highest power to which a multitude can attain. It is no doubt to attain them that whole generations remain stationary, stupefied into an abject obedience that preserves mirages of the grossest felicity or of the most dismal sadness, while a few ardent hearts consent to suffer hopelessly in order to gather the scattered forms and the wandering sounds with which they prepare the return of one of these miracles. It is the creators of myths, the poets, who play the rôle of the greatest importance in the moral universe, since they bind the universal dead illusion to the universal illusion that is being born through a chain of personal illusions to which they consent to sacrifice their rest.

It is impossible to consider without delight to what paradoxical testimonies of confidence in man and life the pessimistic sentiment of the world has always and everywhere led. What if men have had to fear and despair before a potter could turn his pot, and, having passed it through the fire, place fresh flowers in it, before a tapestry-weaver could crush into the depths of his tissues the fruity flesh of the atmosphere and the fields, singing with a light, free heart in the unconsciousness of annihilation! From the brilliant light of the Nile which sculptures in bold profiles a thousand colossi of porphyry, to the ruddy atmosphere, pricked by

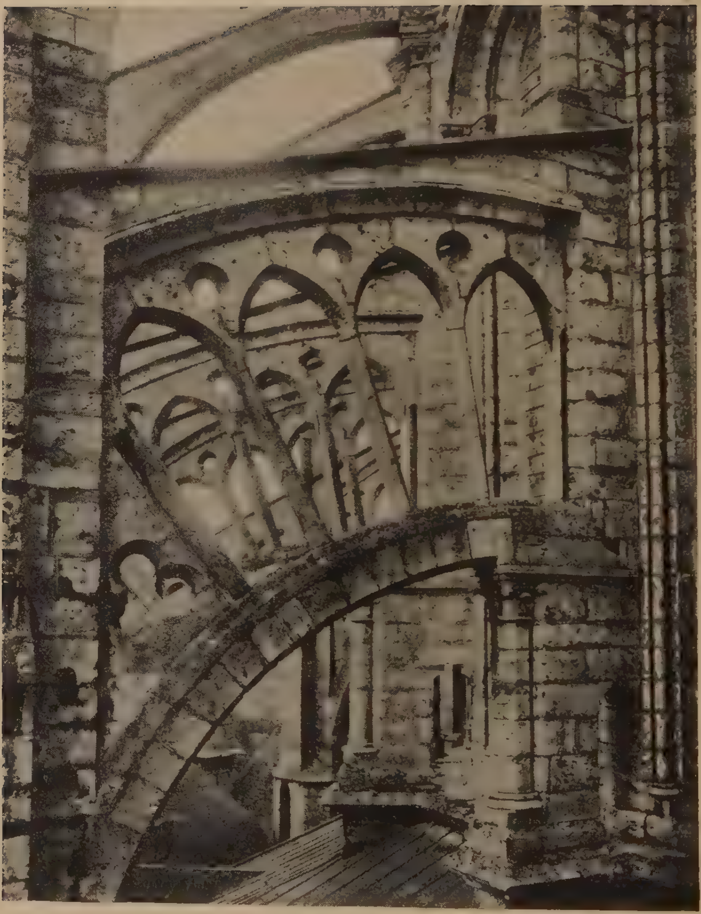

Fig. 217

Stone Construction (Chartres)

smoky candles, in which the English theater made the murderers of kings converse with the winds and the stars, from the Saronic Gulf bordered with little regular temples to the gardens that interlace their geometrical basins of water, their alleys of clipped trees, and their walls of falling water like figures in a dance, from the avenues of monsters that lead through the yellow desert to the tombs of Manchu princes to the vast harmonies of German music, from the caves of the Dekkan that swarm with innumerable figures of lust, carnage, and tenderness to bulbs and spindles turning like a sigh in the warm, quivering air, from the great naves of France swung on their limbs of stone to the factories of America swung on their limbs of iron[1] all the voices of men reply and agree, affirming their continuous and unanimous aspiration toward an imaginary god who grants them in return only the incomparable power of facing their frightful destiny with a firm heart. The

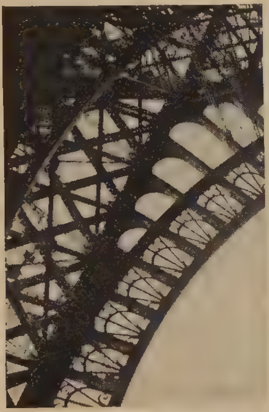

FIG. 218
STEEL CONSTRUCTION (Eiffel Tower)

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[1] Figs. 217, 218.

aim of art is, in the last analysis, to wring from us our consent to life, since the rapture we get through art out of life is conditioned by its horror.

Let the drama, sorrow, and death persist implacably. Christianity, which has clearly seen their necessity is mistaken, I believe, as to their true meaning. The drama is not a punishment. Sorrow does not signify the fall of man nor death his accession to life. These elements, one and all, proclaim and arouse in him an inexhaustible imagination; it creates power, the power to surmount them, and goes on to the point of fertilizing the ashes of his passions. Terrible as life may be, the existence of the creative activity without any other end than itself is enough to justify it. The game evidently appears, at first sight, the least useful of our deeds but it becomes the most useful when we discover that it increases our enthusiasm for life and makes us forget death.

THE END

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